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### Contents

ANTHROPOLOGY 1040, ART 1038, BIBLIOGRAPHY 1043, BIOGRAPHY 1020, 1026-7, CHILDREN'S BOOKS 1042, CRIME 1025, ESSAYS 1019, FICTION 1028-9, HISTORY 1039, LITERATURE AND CRITICISM 1035-6, MEDICINE 1024, PHILOSOPHY 1037, TRAVEL 1041, UNITED STATES 1023, VIETNAM 1021-2

- HENRY GIFFORD  
LESLEY CHAMBERLAIN  
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JONATHAN KEATES  
MOEL BARLEY  
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JEANETTE WINTERSON  
SARAH HAYES  
GEORGE D. PAINTER
- Joseph Brodsky: *Less Than One* - Selected essays 1019-20  
Jadwiga Kosicki and Daniel Gerould: *A Life of Salku* - Stanislaw Przybyszewski - A biographical study with selected letters 1020  
Zbigniew Heibert: *Barbarian in the Garden* 1020  
Richard Nixon: *No More Vietnam*  
Gabriel Kaka: *Anatomy of a war, 1940-1975* 1021-2  
Maurice M. Durand and Nguyen Tran Huan: *An Introduction to Vietnamese Literature* 1022  
Information, please 1022  
Robert Lacey: *Ford - The men and the machine*  
Waldemar A. Nielsen: *The Golden Donors - A new anatomy of the great foundations* 1023  
Elaine Forman Crane: *A Dependent People - Newport, Rhode Island in the revolutionary era* 1023  
David Hamilton: *The Monkey Gland Affair* 1024  
John Walton, Paul B. Boeson and Ronald Bodley Scott (Editors): *The Oxford Companion to Medicine - Volume 11, A-M, Volume 12, N-Z* 1024  
Ray Porter (Editor): *Patterns and Practitioners - lay perceptions of medicine in pre-industrial society* 1024  
Paul Foot: *Murder at the Farm - Who killed Carl Bridgewater?* 1025  
James Baldwin: *Evidence of Things Not Seen* 1025  
Nancy Mitford: *A Talent for Annoy - Essays, journalism and reviews* 1026  
Duff Hart-Davis (Editor): *End of an Era - Letters and journals of Sir Alan Lascelles from 1887 to 1920* 1026  
Frank Giles: *Sundry Times* 1026  
Luminary (poem) 1026  
Dirk Bogarde: *Backlash* 1027  
Peter Evans: *Ari - The Life and times of Aristotle* 1027  
Victor Perera: *Rhes - A Guatemalan bayhead* 1027  
Julian Barnes: *Starting at the Sun* 1028  
Janice Elliott: *Dr Gruber's Daughter* 1028  
Christopher Hope: *The Hattendorf Room* 1029  
Breyten Breytenbach: *End Papers. The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist. Memoir - Mironov* 1029  
"Strangers from Within" into "Lord of the Flies" 1030  
Letters on The Victoria County History, Terrorism, Library Ban, Charlie Chaplin etc 1031  
Commentary  
Ben Travers: *Roostery Nook* (Shaftesbury Theatre) 1032  
Alan Ayckbourn: *Woman in Mind* (Vaudeville Theatre) 1032  
Sophocles: *The Theban Plays* (BBC2) 1033  
Rosa Luxemburg (Lumière Cinema) 1033  
Mona Lisa: (Odeon, Haymarket) 1033  
Je Suis le Cahier: *The Sketchbooks of Picasso* (Royal Academy) 1034  
H.J. Jackson (Editor): *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*  
Antony John Harding: *Coleridge and the Inspired Word*  
Steven Knapp: *Personification and the Sublime - Milton to Coleridge*  
Lucy Newlyn: *Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion*  
Raimondo Modiano: *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* 1035-6  
Desmond King-Hele: *Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets* 1036  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *Targuata Tasso*  
Heinrich von Kleist, Ludwig Tieck, E.T.A. Hoffmann: *Six German Romantic Tales* 1036  
Dan Sperber and Delinda Wilson: *Relevance - Communication and cognition* 1037  
G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker: *Wittgenstein - Rules, grammar and necessity* 1037  
James M. Saulow: *Ganymede in the Renaissance* 1038  
Gall L. Gelzer: *Filippino Lippi's Carafa Chapel - Renaissance art in Rome* 1038  
Michael MacCarthy-Marrogh: *The Munster Plantation - English transplantation to southern Ireland 1583-1641* 1039  
Menna Prestwich (Editor): *International Calvinism 1541-1715* 1039  
Richard Natkiel and Antony Preston: *The Wendenfeld Atlas of Maritime History* 1039  
David Ludden: *Peasant History in South India*  
Marshall M. Boulton: *Agrarian Radicalism in South India*  
Mick Moore: *The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka* 1040  
A. David Napier: *Masks, Transformation and Paradox* 1040  
James Money: *Capri - Island of pleasure* 1041  
Brian M. Schwartz: *Travels Through the Third World* 1041  
Rosemary Sutcliffe: *Flame-Coloured Tuffe* 1042  
Dorothy Horgan: *Tom and Maggie* 1042  
Joan Leslie Conly: *Rosco and the Rats of NIMH* 1042  
Paul Needham: *The Printer and the Pardoner - An unrecorded indulgence printed by William Caxton for the hospital of St Mary Rounceval, Charing Cross* 1043  
Author, Author 1043  
Among this week's contributors 1043  
Index of books reviewed 1043

Cover picture

A pencil drawing from Picasso's sketchbook No 75 (circa 1922). It is related to his painting "Famille au bord de la Mer", Dijon, 1922, and can be seen at the Royal Academy in the exhibition *Je Suis le Cahier: Picasso's Sketchbooks* until November 19. The exhibition is reviewed on page 1034.

## Of Petersburg, poetry and human ties

Henry Gifford

JOSEPH BRODSKY  
*Less Than One: Selected essays*  
501pp. Viking. £15.95.  
0670 814059

Joseph Brodsky prefaces and concludes this long-awaited selection of his essays with autobiographical pieces that bear strangely resonant titles - "Less Than One", "In a Room and a Half". We never forget or are allowed to forget that the critic is a poet; and his book has been put together with all the skilful mortising of a volume of verse. It abounds in contrasts and recurrent thoughts developed in a new setting. The placing of the essays, though broadly chronological, is significant. Thus the first poet Brodsky knew and to whom he felt a large personal debt, Anna Akhmatova, is the earliest to be considered; the last he knew, and to whom he confesses an even larger debt, W. H. Auden, appears last. At the centre he sets two magnificent essays on Marina Tsvetayeva, translated impeccably from the Russian by Barry Rubin. These are the most accomplished pieces in a remarkable collection, and the second in particular has all the subtlety of an Empson conjoined with an earnestness that is unmistakably Russian. Like all excellent criticism they vibrate with the rhythm of the subject itself.

What is implied by "less than one", and why does it feature also as the title of the collection? The reader who knew nothing of Brodsky on picking up the book might guess from this and the title of the last piece that the author is likely to be recalcitrant to the arithmetic of conventional life, and especially the life of post-war Leningrad to which he and his generation (he was born in 1940) found themselves condemned. He explains that it has never been possible for him to view his biography as a linear process - and we see elsewhere that the linear process, whether it is invoked in connection with the understanding of history, or as an adverse comment on Virgil's poem of empire the *Aeneid*, or even reflected in that obligatory two-inch-wide blue stripe that seems to run through all Soviet buildings of a public character, represents for Brodsky a mode of thinking that is hostile to poetry. It does not appear to him that the observant self, in its changing physical envelope, is anything but always the same. A child restive under parental control (as he had been, despite his love for them), the

man having to confront adult responsibilities in panic - these are not in his view at different stages of being. "One is neither of these figures: one is perhaps less than 'one'."

The "room and a half" was the eccentric apartment in a Moorish-style building of 1903 in which Brodsky lived with his devoted parents. (From the balcony, now theirs, Zinaida Gippius had long before shouted insults at the Bolshevik sailors, élite of the revolutionary forces.) Brodsky, in a proud but grieving account of his parents, tells how he lived in the half-room, until he abandoned it. In 1972, as the price of the intransigence which his parents had sought vainly to save him from, knowing what it could bring, he was expelled from the Soviet Union, and his parents were never allowed to visit him abroad. They retained the half-room; Brodsky, who could not be there to close their eyes, was perhaps no more than half a son, though the depth of his feeling is manifest in the simplicity and tenderness of his narrative.

Others, as they gather expertise, gain a position in society. Not so the writer: he accumulates "not expertise but uncertainties". Brodsky belonged to a generation which he refuses to describe as "lost". Rather it was "among the most bookish in the history of Russia, and thank God for that". Growing up in their ravaged but still majestic city ("The most beautiful city on the face of the earth", Brodsky calls it), they sensed something that gave the lie to the bombast of their teachers: they sensed tragedy. And they turned eagerly to books, in the old and honourable tradition of the Russian intelligentsia - to books as the ground of ethical choice. They were, he claims, "the only generation of Russians that had found itself, for whom Giotto and Mandelstam were more imperative than their own personal destinies". They craved about civilization, and had an exaggerated idea of its reality in the West; and like Brodsky himself they were spiritual exiles in their own country.

He however has had to confront exile in physical terms, and these essays form an important part of his activity between 1975 and 1985. All but three were written by him in that supple and confident American English of his, with a virtuosity that rarely slips. It is worth recording the words of another exile, Eflim Etkind, who had spoken up courageously for Brodsky at the travesty of a trial in 1964 which sentenced him to compulsory labour in the North: "The creators of Russian culture are being scattered throughout the countries of the

West, our culture is disintegrating. A poet works with language, and when all about him he hears a foreign tongue, he gradually grows dumb, his linguistic sense is blunted and words fail him." But Brodsky's linguistic sense has proved far more resilient than the scholar Etkind, sensitive judge of poetry that he is, could have foreseen. Brodsky now lives in the English-speaking world, and has advanced boldly to meet its language. He remains, and



he intends to remain, a Russian poet, in the Petersburg line that runs through Derzhavin and Pushkin, Akhmatova and Mandelstam, all of whom bear out what he says of the former capital: that those who have lived there long enough are "bound to associate virtue with proportion". But he also takes his place in American letters, and his sense of the interplay between Russian and English is very instructive.

Brodsky's motive for deciding in 1977 that he would "write (essays, translations, occasionally a poem) in English" was "to please a shadow", that of Auden, who had befriended him at the start of his exile and died in 1973. It is notable that Brodsky is full of humility when discussing the writers he admires. Akhmatova,

Mandelstam, Mandelstam's widow who became the witness and judge of her generation with an authority derived from memorizing her husband's work and a close though often interrupted friendship with Akhmatova, Tsvetayeva, Minstule, Cavaly (whom he acknowledges as his "favourite poet") - they all find in Brodsky the most persuasive and selfless of advocates. But Auden is to him what Rilke had been to Tsvetayeva, as the poem "New Year's Greetings" records: Brodsky in his line-by-line account - a so-called "footnote" extending to 72 pages - describes the newly dead Rilke as the perfect listener to Tsvetayeva's poetry, the recipient of her confessions.

Let us not demur at his description of Auden as "the greatest mind of the twentieth century" and as possessing an "intelligence, which in my view has no equal". Brodsky's judgment of Russian poets, so far as the grateful foreigner can conclude, is wholly reliable and worthy of his succession to poet-critics like Mandelstam, Tsvetayeva and Pasternak. The engagement with Auden's poetry is another thing; and even if his estimate should seem quite out of scale, here as no doubt in America, what led Brodsky to declare it so emphatically is important to see and should be viewed with respect. He says that by writing in English he could "work on his [Auden's] terms, to be judged, if not by his code of conscience, then by whatever it is in the English language that made this code of conscience possible". Brodsky speaks of Auden's "autonomy, sanity, equipoise, irony, detachment - in short, wisdom". Whether they exist so palpably in Auden's work is not the point. Our question should be: are they potentialities in the English language, or can it confer?

Brodsky remarks in his explication of Auden's poem "September 1, 1939", delivered to Columbia students in 1984: "The truth is, alas, that both men and institutions are good for nothing...". His social despair, we must assume, is absolute. However, it excited him greatly to read during his time as a convict in Russia - "sitting there in the small wooden shack, peering through the square porthole-size window at the wet, muddy, dirt road with a few stray chickens on it" - some lines that Auden subsequently dropped from his elegy "In Memory of W. B. Yeats":

Time that is intolerant  
Of the brave and innocent,  
And indifferent in a week  
To a beautiful physique.

Warships language and forgives  
Everyone by whom it lives;

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Pardons cowardice, conceit,  
Lays its honours at their feet.

"Time . . . worships language", he then reflected, half-incredulously, "and yet the world around us was still what it was."

We discover from his essays on Akhmatova and Tsvetayeva how it is that language not only triumphs over time (something he illustrates vividly in the piece on Mandelstam) but enables the poet who listens to it intently enough to enlarge his apprehension of life in ethical terms. Akhmatova became the poet of her people, not because she had populist leanings or set out to be their deliberate mouthpiece, but because she felt instinctively the ethos of Russian folk poetry. When the Revolution came, she recognized that it would bring to an inordinate degree what was already known to the folk poetry – grief. Tsvetayeva went further in her conviction that the tragic mode is implicit in the Russian language, and she carried it to a point which the Orthodox tradition of reconciliation had kept out of reach. The sense of ambivalence, as felt in her "philosophy of discomfort", became not only the object of expression but its means as well. With the utmost brilliance she adopted the method that Brodsky ascribes to Dostoevsky, "in many ways . . . our first writer to trust the intuition of language more than his own". Tsvetayeva's poetry is merciless in its logic, unimpeded in its growth word out of word, perception crowning perception.

When it comes to Montale and Cavafy, both of whom I suspect Brodsky, despite his extraordinary linguistic talent, knows principally through English translation, their "code of conscience" has to be surmised from what can be gathered about their tone. He does indeed write very well on both, and one's initial surprise that they could be accommodated along with Tsvetayeva – particularly the reticent, even stammering Cavafy, dumb in diction and low-pitched – soon falls away when Brodsky comments on the entire honesty of both poets. Montale has the first of the virtues attributed to Auden – autonomy, which he quietly achieved very much against the tide of Italian poetry in his youth, although Ungaretti and Saba worked to the same ends. Autonomy is no less the merit of Cavafy, situated as he was at the edge of the Hellenic world in Alexandria, re-

note from the robust tradition of *Eroskriol*, the seventeenth-century Cretan narrative poem, and the ballads, the inventor of his own demotic, as Seferis says, and like Montale a man of the highest poetic rectitude, a stickler for the unwelcome truth.

It will have become plain that Brodsky, whatever his personal despair – and he remarks somewhere that the future is even more dreary to contemplate than the past – does not deny, but rather affirms with passion, the place of conscience in poetry. Tsvetayeva's phrase, "art in the light of conscience", appeals to him, and it can be turned round to say "conscience in the light of art". Human life in the twentieth century, no matter where it is lived, Brodsky would have us know, is a poor thing, and it offers no sure abiding-place upon earth. He describes Akhmatova in these terms: "She was, essentially, a poet of human ties: cherished, strained, severed." That is true of the

other poets reviewed by Brodsky, as of Brodsky himself. And he continues: "She showed these evolutions first through the prism of the individual heart, then through the prism of history, such as it was."

Tsvetayeva's love for Rilke (whom she had never met and only a little while earlier had begun to communicate with) is described by Brodsky as demanding from her "maximum selflessness and maximum candour". In the greater poets of this century one can discern how the "individual heart" becomes selfless and the poet's "I" triumphantly turns into "we"; and it is, I suggest, from these poets that we can gain the full sense of what "the prism of history" means when directed to the individual life.

Brodsky may never be allowed to return to Russia. But he has brought with him to the West the most valuable thing Russia can give us – a reaffirmation of the belief that art is not,

in Montale's words, "a form of existence for those who have never lived – a compensation or a surrogate". Brodsky does not quote this definition, but he contradicts it with one of his own: "Art is an alternate [or should it be alternative?] form of existence, though the emphasis in this statement falls on the word 'existence'". The ivory tower has been demolished by the harsh battery of events in our age. It would be altogether wrong to suppose that the life of a serious poet is a retreat from reality, and not a confrontation of the gravest moral issues, with a vigilance that is implicit in the most responsible use of language. Brodsky does not accuse the English language of ineffectuality, nor does he "lament the dormant state of its speakers' psyche". These essays give the necessary shock to the somnolent; and they also remind us that the English language can be adjusted to a truer perception of history, such as it is, in a global epoch.

## A wretchedly modern woman

Lesley Chamberlain

JADWIGA KOSICKI and DANIEL GEROLD  
A Life of Solitude: Stanisław Przybyszewski –  
A biographical study with selected letters.  
237pp. Quartet. £14.95.  
07043 25977

The woman whose play about Revolutionary France underlay this summer's Royal Shakespeare Company production of *The Danton Affair* led such a short, wretched life and projected such a dream of imperturbable superiority into her unsuccessful writing that one might call her a "Woman from Underground", after Dostoevsky, had she only had a little guile or malice. Her father, the Polish nationalist Stanisław Przybyszewski, a devoted survivor himself, neglected her from her illegitimate birth in 1901 and on the death of her mother, a minor painter, Stacha, aged eleven, already inward and intensely competitive, went to live with friends and then with an aunt. By the time she was eighteen she had had homes in Poland, France, Switzerland and Austria, knew German, French, Polish, drew,

played the violin, and was a depressive perfectionist, desperately alone with her literary ambitions.

Przybyszewski was meanwhile enjoying fame as a professional Sztanie writer. His disolute life, which made him a huge success with women, had grown wings in Berlin, where he inspired jealousy in Munch and fear in Strindberg, and when he returned to Poland he was quickly acclaimed leader of the Polish modern movement. Stacha met him virtually for the first time in Cracow when she was nineteen. She fell in love with him as a literary stranger and the prodigal parent was flattered. His second wife probably rightly saw Stacha as a rival, which drove the couple to meet in secret and possibly to fulfil the prophecy of jealousy by committing incest. Certain letters of Stanisław's to her father were either destroyed by her or have been withheld. Subsequently Stacha had a nervous breakdown and cut off contact with Przybyszewski, although she continued to receive money from him and in the year of his death, 1927, was still writing letters begging him for literary introductions and criticism.

Many of the letters, which occupy two-thirds

of this volume, are an all the more painful record of Przybyszewski's chronic unhappiness because they were never sent. In 1923 she married a schoolteacher from Gdansk, and found companionship with this man who was lonely, poor and obscure as herself, but already she was a morphine addict, thanks to a new Polish work her husband died of a morphine overdose in Paris. She moved from the cold, dark, cramped apartment into an empty barrack cell behind the school, giving language lessons, living off her husband's legacy, and fearing her circumstances. She could tolerate only the darkness of the cinema; the morphine made her mental instability worse, and the money was running out. Her letters to her husband begged for help, other notes to members of the literary establishment quoted her father's name and wrestled with her ambitions and insecurities as she pleaded for a leg-up to fame. She pursued creative writing with iron discipline because it offered the only hope of some certain life, but she could only survive her aspirations by wildly believing herself a genius. An avowed Freudian incapable of analysing herself, she ended up living in a self-imposed concentration camp; eventually she gave up going out even to buy food and died of her addiction and malnutrition, aged thirty-four.

The cell in which Stacha lived is one of the pictures included in this utterly sad book. It records a unique story of human ambition and breakdown. Przybyszewski's three plays about the French Revolution will not secure the international reputation she sought, but her life shows up her megalomaniacal socialist father's "modernism" as mere theory compared with her own loneliness and inner death. Her existence begs the label modern because it was so exposed, overwrought and faithless, and distanced with exotic philosophies and far-reaching political fears. Fearing a second world war in 1927 she wrote characteristically: "I know that the purpose of man's life is to serve as a guinea pig for someone else's experiments, and thus a human being will endure anything, absolutely everything."

In *The Danton Case*, a long work unsuited to the stage, Stacha gave Danton the lascivious corruptibility she saw in her father, and Robespierre her own unflinching will and dedication. She watched Robespierre triumph fastidiously, but at much cost to his health. Andrzej Waljda, by shifting the balance of virtue radically in favour of Danton, made a successful film adaptation, but Pam Giam's more loyal version at the Barbican has not drawn an appreciative audience. Stacha was perhaps the character we needed to see on stage.

*Landscapes and Literati: Unpublished letters of W. H. Hudson and George Gissing*, edited by Dennis Shrubbs and Pierre Couillias (LS1pp. Salisbury: Michael Russell: £12.95; 0859551172), contains 100 letters written by Hudson between 1887 and 1921, together with nine recently discovered letters from Gissing to Hudson. Among Hudson's correspondents are Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, John Massfield, Grant Richards, H. J. Massingham and George Gissing's younger brother, Algernon.

## Towards an overdue destiny

Christopher Thorne

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No More Vietnams  
240pp. W. H. Allen. £10.95.  
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GABRIEL KOLKO  
Vietnam: Anatomy of a war, 1940-1975  
627pp. Allen and Unwin. £20.  
0049590049

The exposure and removal from office of Richard Nixon testified to the capacity of the American body politic for vigorous self-criticism and anti-authoritarianism – a capacity which the British have cause to envy. At the same time, the subsequent feting of the former president by the American Right, like the continuing reverence for his foreign-policy partner, Henry Kissinger, as a man possessed of a profound understanding of international affairs, suggests that there remains much to be self-critical about. The Watergate affair itself receives only passing mention in Nixon's latest exercise in self-justification, *No More Vietnams*, as an obstacle to the achievement of complete success in Southeast Asia. ("Some of my closest aides resigned under a darkening cloud of serious allegations and scurrilous innuendo.") The language, the attitudes, the values and priorities of the Nixon White House that were so faithfully recorded for the outside world to hate might never have been. It is a careful, caring, rational and responsible man whom we are now invited to observe ordering, for example, the essential bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong in December 1972.

For anyone who needs to obtain further insight into the perceptions and reasoning of those supporting what Walter Dean Burnham has termed "the Reagan counterrevolution", *No More Vietnams* will be of some interest. They will learn, *inter alia*, how "the Third World War began before World War II ended"; what needless folly it was to allow the Shah to be overthrown; how, with Ronald Reagan in the White House (the language is, as ever, instructive), "America's first international losing streak has been halted", with the invasion of Grenada "demonstrating that we could still do something on the world stage"; and how crucial it remains, as a new Soviet *Schwerpunkt* develops in Central America, for Americans fully to recover "our confidence in our ability to wield power effectively".

However, for serious students of American policy-making during the Vietnam war, familiar with such well-documented and thoughtful studies as George Herring's *America's Longest War* and *The Irony of Vietnam: The system worked* by Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts, this book is virtually worthless. The level of accuracy and analysis provided in *No More Vietnams* is indicated early on, in the statements that Winston Churchill "knew that independence for the colonies was inevitable", and that the siege of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 (where the United States, Nixon argues, should have intervened decisively and thus halted the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia) "was made possible only by the fall of Asia's largest domino – China". The United States, we are told, had "won the war in Vietnam" by the beginning of 1973, only to have that triumph thrown away by an irresponsible Congress, which prevented the further exercise of American military power in the region and fatally reduced the flow of military aid to the government of South Vietnam. Before this shameful abdication, the pacification programme had not only "worked wonders" but had created the conditions within which "we [had] won the political struggle for the allegiance of the South Vietnamese people". The military programme of Vietnamisation "had worked", with Operation Lam Son 719 (the shambling entry into Laos of President Thieu's forces in February 1971, and their subsequent rout) proving "a military success". Just as American soldiers, for their part, "were not haunted by doubts about the morality of the war", so Ngo Dinh Diem (who had "understood that the first task of government is to establish order", and whose deeds were "all legitimate acts of government") had earlier succeeded in creating "a state that was substantially free". Further historical insights which the volume provides include the following treatment of the now well-documented sugges-

tion that the North Vietnamese "attack" on US ships in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 4, 1964, did not in fact take place: "I have concluded that it did and there is no credible evidence that we provoked it."

In short, were it not for the identity of the author and the worthwhile cause, in these difficult times, of saving students and libraries the expenditure of nearly £11, *No More Vietnams* would not warrant reviewing space. To say that, by contrast, Gabriel Kolko's *Vietnam: Anatomy of a war* deserves a more detailed appraisal than can be provided here is not to suggest that, unlike the disgraced ex-president, Professor Kolko provides a balanced and detached analysis of the war. He does not; and indeed his underlying assumptions, being more or less the mirror-image of Nixon's, have created a perspective and treatment that are scarcely less Msniechan than the latter's. For Nixon, as for many of his fellow-countrymen, the essential goodness and nobility of the United States and its foreign-policy goals are a given. For Kolko (American imperialism being the inescapable consequence of the country's capitalist structure and dynamics, and yet being faced, after its defeat in Vietnam, with a world of widespread social change and revolt), the United States is left with no more than "the ability . . . to impose immeasurable suffering on people whose fates its arms and money cannot control". Yet just as Nixon needs to establish the antithetical evil of Communism, so too Kolko – every bit as much an American – needs to discover and proclaim his own City on the Hill; to celebrate the achievements of his own Good People in the form of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Kolko's treatment of the doings of his heroes during the years under review is manifestly partial. The widespread atrocities and killings that accompanied their land-reform programme in the North in the mid-1950s, for example, while mentioned, are played down, emphasis being placed, rather, on the regime's achievement, via its co-operative movement, of "social unity and consensus within the once bitterly divided northern peasantry". The violence employed in the South against landlords and the officials of Diem and Thieu is described – in the best Pentagon tradition – as "surgical", and "generally very popular". The butchery that took place in Hue after its capture by the Communists during the Tet offensive in 1968 is passed over in silence, as is the wretched fate after the war's end of various southerners who had fought under the aegis of Hanoi in the National Liberation Front. The struggles among factions within Hanoi itself – examined in, for example, Ralph Smith's *International History of the Vietnam War* – are for the most part glossed over. "The Revolution" is all, and indeed in Kolko's hands becomes anthropomorphized, so that it is not Ho Chi Minh or Le Duan or some wider grouping of "mortals", but "The Revolution" who/which in 1964, for example, "saw . . . immediately" the "new social dynamic" that was emerging in the South at the time, and "realized" its implications.

Kolko does not go so far as to claim that the Party was infallible. But his observation at one point that its surprise at the speed of its victory in 1975 "revealed the extent to which it had . . . misunderstood the total social dynamics of the conflict" is out of keeping with his repeated emphasis on the degree to which these "extremely careful students of social dynamics" "fully appreciated the larger context of the struggle". (Kolko's treatment of the People's Republic of China also swerves about from time to time. That country's role in Southeast Asia after 1949 is in one place described as having its roots in a thousand years of history, with Peking's attitudes towards Hanoi being criticized as shaped by selfish considerations of national interest and with American intelligence estimates being dismissed as wrongly assuming that "China's ideological pretensions" were "a crucial guide to its actions as a state". Yet, elsewhere, Nixon and Kissinger are taken to task for "passing lightly over the time-consuming reality of ideology's restraints" where Peking was concerned, and for believing that the diplomacy of Marxist-Leninist states "could be made to conform to American-defined rules".) The Vietnamese Communists, in other words, were in tune with what the author sees as the main trends and forces of

history, their "notion of the critical role of the individual" providing a "distinctive and fundamental addition to Marxist-Leninist theory and an implicit major revision of the relative importance of leaders and purely organizational forms".

Kolko's own views on the "main trends and forces of history" are thrust at the reader throughout – although here, too, his emphasis can shift quite drastically. Thus, for example, the victory of the Communist Party is at one point advanced as "testimony . . . to the malleability of history as a general process", whereas the North's generals in 1975 are depicted as being "merely . . . the players in history, but not its creators". The final collapse of the South Vietnamese régime between 1973 and 1975, Kolko explains, had become inevitable "because the movement of history had entered a cumulative phase in which all that Saigon and its enemies had done before now produced its own logic and momentum. Events were the outcome of all the preceding human decisions and actions, their collective wisdom or folly, but at this time took on a life of their own qualitatively." The United States, for its part, was bound to act as it did, being "the major inheritor of the mantle of imperialism in modern history"; and yet we are also told that it was the "momentum" decision to back Ngo Dinh Diem in 1954 that "would usher in a major phase of American history, shaped to a crucial extent by the strengths, desires and weaknesses of one man". Meanwhile, Vietnam as a whole moved on towards the realization, in 1975, of its "destiny, two decades overdue".

*Anatomy of a War* conveys its self-righteous and self-satisfied impression of its author as "does *No More Vietnams*, and its stated aim – "to hold a mirror up to our past and to ourselves, perhaps to our future, and to the human condition in the last half of the twentieth century" – is arguably overblown. None

of this means, however, that Kolko's book, too, can be disregarded by students of the war. On the contrary, for all its irritating characteristics and lack of balance, it contains matter which is important for our understanding of that conflict and its wider significance.

In part, the value of the work lies in the extent and nature of the material which has been brought together in its pages. More importantly, however, it arises from Kolko's correct insistence that "war is not simply a conflict between armies; more and more it is a struggle between competing social systems, incorporating the political, economic, and cultural institutions of all rivals". This is a perspective which is not the property of Marxists alone. In Kolko's case, it leads him to focus on the question of "how Vietnamese society changes, and how the Communists, the Republic of Vietnam, and Americans understood these trends and dealt with them"; more particularly, he is concerned throughout with the issues and implications surrounding the land itself, its ownership, and the Vietnamese peasantry, issues which created considerable problems for the Communist Party, but which above all were central to the failure of the United States.

As Kolko points out, it was not simply that American politicians, generals and civilian experts were for the most part unaware of the significance of what one of them later termed "land-based grievances". The dilemma in which Washington found itself had a wider basis still, arising as it did from the fact that "the Republic of Vietnam was not capable of creating an alternative to the National Liberation Front, its leadership [being] just a reflection of the crisis of Vietnamese society in this century and of the absence of a stable foundation for an indigenous ruling class". Moreover, and again as Kolko summarizes the situation that developed in the 1960s, "the very social,

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political, and economic distortions involved in the entire process of the war and the need to keep Thieu in power made the goal ... of creating a viable economic basis for [the United States's] surrogate in South Vietnam ... that much more elusive."

The sections of the book which explore these economic dimensions of the relationship between the United States and South Vietnam are particularly valuable, as are those which draw out the interconnections between the military, diplomatic and financial problems facing the Americans themselves on either side of their devaluation of the dollar in 1971. For the Vietnam war exposed the limits not only of what could be achieved by technological sophistication and massive firepower on the field of battle, but also of the capacity of the American economy, and this at a time when its share of the world's gross product was declining from around one-half in 1950 to that of under one-fifth by the 1980s. Less tangibly, but no less importantly, the war demonstrated the truth of Professor Manfred Halpern's observation in 1963: that Americans and their government had "scarcely begun to develop theories of social change that would allow us to understand the fundamental revolutions now in progress in the world."

For Kolkko, of course, this last failure is to be seen as springing inexorably from the nature and requirements of the capitalist system in general and that of the United States in particular. Some of us would place more emphasis on the related, but not identical, question of American political culture as it had developed since the late nineteenth century in particular, and on, for example, the contrast during the Second World War between the American experience of and responses to that conflict and those of other societies around the globe. We would also pay more attention to the choices that remained, none the less, for policy-makers to make in Washington, notwithstanding the inclinations fostered by longer-term characteristics of the Republic. One can agree with Kolkko, even so, that over Vietnam Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon alike, as they "would not and could not concede that the economic, political, and social dynamics of a great part of the world exceeded the capacities of any one or even a group of nations to control", were reflecting a set of attitudes which had been developing since 1945 and even earlier; that the underlying significance of the American failure in Vietnam lay in the United States's "intrinsic inability to create a viable political, economic, and ideological system capable of attaining the prerequisites of military success".

## INFORMATION, PLEASE

*Sir George (later Lord) Riddell* (1863-1934): whereabouts of his diaries (1908-23), extracts from which were published in 1933 and 1934. Peter Rowland, 65 Essex Road, London E10 6EG.

*Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland*: any letters or information for the period 1930-51; for a book. A. W. Mulford, 87 St Philip's Road, Cambridge CB1 3DA.

*Florence Irwin* (1883-1965), Lady Warden of Stranmillis College, Belfast, 1922-48, and writer on cookery: any information, recollections, etc; for a biographical study. Deborah Shortley, Wesley McCann, Art and Design Centre, University of Ulster at Belfast, York Street, Belfast BT15 1ED.

*Lilo Linko* (1906-63), Anglo-German writer: copies sought for translation into German of her first four books, published in London: *Tale without End* (1934), *Restless Flags* (1935), *Allah Delivered* (1936) and *Cancel All Vows* (1938).

Karl Hoff, Universitäts-Bibliothek/Postfach, 28 Bremen 33, Federal Republic of Germany.

*Zacharias Topelius* (1818-98), Finnish-Swedish poet, novelist and author of children's stories: any information, especially concerning Topelius's reception in Britain and the USA; for a literary biography.

Peter Siegfried, Department of English, Åbo Akademi, Lybecksgatan 3, 65100 Nykarleby, Finland.



North Vietnamese prisoners of war, captured in the last stages of the 1972 offensive; this photograph is taken from *The Illustrated History of the Vietnam War* by Brian Becken (263pp, Blandford, £19.95, 07137 17904).

## First and later flowerings

David G. Marr

MAURICE M. DURAND and NGUYEN TRAN HUAN  
An Introduction to Vietnamese Literature  
Edited and translated by D. M. Hawke  
213pp. Columbia University Press. \$25.  
0231058527

In the early 1970s a survey was conducted of American PhD dissertations on Vietnam. Among nearly one hundred dissertations only one dealt specifically with Vietnamese literature. Thus it should not surprise us that the first general study in English of Vietnamese literature is a translation of a sixteen-year-old book in French by the former director of the colonial Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient and a Vietnamese physician resident in Paris. Maurice Durand, who died in 1966, wrote prolifically on traditional Vietnamese poetry and popular culture. Nguyen Tran Huan also preferred to study traditional genres, but accepted responsibility in this survey for colonial and post-colonial literature.

Because research for this book was completed so long ago, new findings, especially concerning events prior to the seventeenth century, are absent. For example, the authors' assumption that Vietnam assimilated huge chunks of Chinese culture prior to the tenth century is now generally rejected in favour of a more complex explanation emphasising fourth-century and fifteenth-century Neo-Confucian influences. The argument that few, if any, authentic written materials survived from the Ly dynasty (1010-1225) or Tran dynasty (1225-1400) periods has been eroded by textual analyses over the past twenty years, both in Vietnam and overseas, although cautionary remarks by Durand and Huan about scholars being too quick to accept subsequent manuscripts as genuine copies, rather than substantive revisions, still deserve to be taken seriously. In Hanoi especially there is an attempt to push achievements further back in time. A few contemporary writers even assert that bronze-age Vietnamese invented their own writing system in the fifth century BC. Behind such claims lie deep xenophobic frustrations at the undeniable historical impact of China on Vietnam.

One of the best chapters in *An Introduction to Vietnamese Literature* deals with the flowering of *nom* poetry and narrative verse in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. *Nom* characters had been invented many centuries earlier to represent Vietnamese sounds and syntax as distinct from Chinese, but it was during this period that the advantages of linking the spoken vernacular to a writing system became obvious, and a *nom* literary corpus de-

veloped. To quote Durand and Huan, *nom* works share

an enchanting tenderness and melancholy which are characteristically Vietnamese; and the best and most moving examples have triumphantly stood the test of time and popular taste. The varying list of Vietnamese six-eight or seven-seven-six-eight verse is deeply moving for a Vietnamese, particularly in passages where a halting rhythm produces the effect of stifled sobs: here both reader and listener may shiver compulsively with sensuous pleasure.

Connoisseurs of such poetry remain aware that authors weighed each word, calculating its position, studying its resonances. Ordinary Vietnamese just enjoy it and continue to use snippets of verse in everyday speech, a pleasant trait now largely lost to western languages.

The central jewel in the *nom* crown is "The Tale of Kieu", a narrative poem written by Nguyen Du in the early nineteenth century. Each devotee points to particular attributes that put Kieu ahead of all competitors. Most Vietnamese, however, put form ahead of substance when explaining its allure. Durand and Huan try for a middle ground, arguing that Nguyen Du "enchants the reader with a sequential development of melodic recitation in which meaning, imagery, symbolism, and music are inextricably interwoven". Perhaps fearful that no translation can live up to such hyperbole, however well deserved, they offer readers a mere eighteen lines from the 3,254-line poem. Fortunately, one can go to Huynh Sanh Thong's bilingual edition of *The Tale of Kieu* (Yale University Press, 1983) for a well-crafted translation.

When Vietnamese authors later chose to write in *quoc ngu*, a roman script devised originally by European missionaries, the cultural disruption was not nearly as profound as might be imagined, precisely because *nom* already linked them to the vernacular, and indeed simply needed to be transliterated rather than translated. Poetry and prose in Chinese remained a more difficult problem; for decades many *quoc ngu* publications bore the ponderous stamp of Chinese syntax and parallel sentence structure. By the 1930s, however, *quoc ngu* had become what its name asserts, the national writing system. It was a complex, vibrant hybrid derived from oral, *nom*, Chinese and French progenitors. Unfortunately, Durand and Huan fail to capture the excitement of this transition, when every book or periodical was an experiment in language development. Instead, they blandly assume that French literature provided all the inspiration for Vietnamese changes.

French colonial language policies are never addressed seriously by Durand and Huan. At one point they do state that the French government "hoped to achieve thought-control over the Vietnamese", but this assertion is thin left,

to dangle. Instead, they repeatedly imply that Vietnamese writers succeeded in going their own way with little or no reference to the opinions or actions of colonial administrators. Amidst fulsome praise for the journal *Nam Phong* (1917-1934), no mention is ever made of the fact that a ranking member of the dreaded French *Sûreté* was one of its founders, and indeed even insisted on putting his name on the masthead for a while. Durand and Huan never refer to the colonial censorship system, except to note twice that it was relaxed between 1935 and 1939.

By contrast, the authors exonerate Vietnamese communist leaders for meddling in literary affairs after the August 1945 Revolution, to the effect that "not one notable work was produced". Interference is only one part of the explanation, however, for the undoubted qualitative decline in Vietnamese literature after 1945. It ignores the fact that hundreds of writers chose of their own volition to become revolutionary propagandists, long before the Communist Party was able to control publishing outlets. It also fails to explain the simultaneous literary decline in regions of Vietnam not controlled by the communists. Finally, it begs the question of exactly who constituted the pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary reading audiences, and what tastes they had in poetry and prose. The colonial period reading public was both smaller and more discerning, while post-colonial readers seemed more attracted to melodramatic potboilers, whether of the herolovariety from Hanoi, or the still-living brand printed in Saigon.

Durand and Huan seem unaware of how many literary works continued to circulate in manuscript form, or, in the case of poetry, by word-of-mouth. In both communist and anti-communist areas of Vietnam, some of the best authors laboured over creations meant largely for circulation among family members, friends and literary peers, while simultaneously earning a living by producing backwork for the public at large. Private manuscripts invariably carried a pseudonym, or no name at all. More recently, some of these manuscripts have slipped overseas, occasionally to be published in refugee journals.

*An Introduction to Vietnamese Literature* should be read together with various published anthologies in translation. Probably the best in English is *The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry* (Yale, 1979), edited and translated by Huynh Sanh Thong. A 1,045-page compendium, edited by Nguyen Khac Vien and Huu Ngoc, entitled *Vietnamese Literature* (Hanoi, 1983[?]), is also quite useful. None the less, all of these works point up the need for more wide-ranging analysis and critical debate. Above all, Vietnamese poetry and prose need to be seen in comparative perspective, to become part of an international discourse.

## Sadism, greed and some insanity

Richard Davenport-Hines

ROBERT LACEY  
Ford: The man and the machine  
778pp. Heinemann. £14.95.  
0434401927  
WALDEMAR A. NIELSEN  
The Golden Donor: A new anatomy of the great foundations  
468pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £16.95.  
0 297 78932 5.

Berlin and Potsdam in the eighteenth century may seem to have little in common with twentieth-century Detroit and Dearborn, yet the similarities between the Hohenzollern and Ford families, the parallels both of circumstance and personality, are extraordinarily arresting. That absolute power not only corrupts, but produces regression of personality on a massive and irremediable scale, wreaking psychological destruction all around, was all too evident in the makings of the Prussian warrior state and of the Ford Motor Company. Though Robert Lacey's cheerful but loosely written account of the Ford dynasty has nothing in common with Lord Macaulay in style, the cameos and reflections on the morality of power in the latter's essay on Frederick the Great give point to Lacey's animated and picturesque anecdotes.

Business or economic historians will find little original in Lacey's book, but his account of Henry Ford I and his namesake grandson nevertheless brims with interest. He recounts the familiar story of the semi-literate Yankee mechanic, who after several false starts in business, and some turpitude in his dealings with his financial backers, was propelled to the forefront of the American motor-car industry by the success from 1908 of his cheap car for the masses, the Model T, by his subsequent development in 1913 of a moving assembly-line for mass production, and by his espousal in 1914 of a daily wage of \$5 for his factory workers. Called variously by Lacey "the Great Simplifier" or "the Great Tinkerer", Henry Ford I made his breakthrough largely by serendipity, and consolidated his company's position by conservative financial policies which accumulated vast cash reserves. He was not squeamish in pecuniary transactions, and his treatment of his early partners betrayed cupidity and ruthless lust for dominion.

After 1920, his direction of the Ford Motor Company was arbitrary and incompetent, abetted by the crafty and servile housecarls with whom he surrounded himself. "Compulsive and egocentric", according to Lacey, he

withdrew from any situation in which he could not get his own way or intimidated those around him with violent displays of temper, on one occasion kicking and wrenching apart with his bare hands a prototype replacement of the Model T which displeased him. "Suspicious and ambittered" in his dealings with others, his "personal insecurity and lack of direction" gave him a voracious appetite for press publicity, although in Detroit society he suffered the mortifications which often befall ambitious upstarts. He felt himself exempt from ordinary rules of human behaviour: surrounded by sycophants, "his self-absorption had become so over-powering that he really believed that the world thought as he wanted it to think". His only son Edsel was treated with sustained and systematic sadism, indeed harried to a premature death in 1943. As a believer in the authenticity of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, he was viciously antisemitic and attributed all evil to "bankers, munition makers, alcoholic drink, kings and their henchmen, and schoolbooks". Steady management of the company was smashed "on the anvil of his ever hardening egotism", and he sought to regiment and dominate even the domestic lives of his factory workers, opining that "a great business is really too big to be human" and deprecating "reliance on good feeling" in labour relations.

Henry Ford's character, in short, resembled that of King Frederick William I of Prussia, described by Macaulay as "hard and bad". The habit of exercising arbitrary power had made him frightfully savage. His rage constantly vented itself to right and left in curses and blows. . . . But it was in his own house that he was most unreasonable and ferocious. His palace was hell, and he the most execrable of fiends, a cross between Moloch and Puck.

The similarities went further. Both men were crummy about food, the king imposing on his Court a vile and monotonous diet of cabbage and the manufacturer becoming so obsessed with soy beans that they occurred at almost every stage of a twelve-course banquet which he held in 1934. Frederick William became gripped by monomania and took his only pleasure in collecting tall soldiers: every country was ransacked by agents for youths over six and a half feet in height, for recruitment to a special brigade of giant grenadiers. Ford's counterpart was his reliance on and ultimately senile devotion to a racketeer called Harry Bennett, who fed "his master's fantasies of omnipotence" and recruited hundreds of hoodlums to the company, which they degraded, corrupted and terrorized in the 1930s and early 1940s. "His habit of canting about moderation, peace, liberty and the happiness

which a good mind derives from the happiness of others, had imposed on some who should have known better", to apply another phrase of Macaulay to Henry Ford I. He encouraged vindictiveness and intrigue at every level of his company, boasting that he kept his executives "perpetually off balance and this spirit seeped right down to the factory floor".

By the 1940s, under Henry Ford I, the company was managed with "caprice and incompetence", and increasingly corruption and chaos as well, from which it was rescued in 1945 by the ascendancy of the founder's young grandson, Henry II. By shrewd selection of new executive managers, and by conscientious attempts to restore stability and psychological serenity to the company, Henry II did an admirable work of reconstruction in the decade after his succession, although like Frederick the Great, he "by no means relinquished his hereditary privilege of kicking and cudgelling" his subordinates. Yet increasingly after 1960 his personal relations deteriorated, particularly as his drinking grew deeper.

Some of the most depraved incidents described by Lacey concern the long and wild battle for power between Henry II and his former protégé Lee Iacocca, a motor salesman whose vocabulary betrays abnormal obsession with excretion and latrine, and whose wife boasted that he daily masturbated his slaving mirror, "I am the king, and the king can do no wrong". This vicious in-fighting makes a sad and disgraceful story, especially as the strains of the experience permanently estranged Ford from two of his children.

What is equally dispiriting is that on the evidence of Waldemar Nielsen's chatty and amusing account of the thirty-six richest philanthropic foundations in the United States, the worst features of the Ford story are repeated throughout the north American plutocracy. Few of the foundations have been inspired by genuinely eleemosynary instincts: created as tax dodges, or as devices for founders to influence ownership of companies from beyond the

grave, the bulk have been poorly conceived, astonishingly ill-organized and amateurish in their approach to philanthropy. Many have been riven with bitter factionalism and demoralization among permanent staff: others have been entangled for years in litigation between trustees. The furious battle for control of the Bush Foundation, an episode which Nielsen suggests "was powered by simple ego laced with greed and some insanity", typifies the personal vendettas which mar large-scale American philanthropy.

Egotism provides the keynote of the book. The hubris of McGeorge Bundy, whose imperious direction of the Ford Foundation "dissipated almost three fourths of the real value of its assets" during fifteen years, a loss of about "\$6 billion of philanthropic resources measured in current dollars", or the complacency of trustees who permitted such ineptitude, are rebarbative but representative. Although the work of the Johnson Foundation in primary health care, or the examples of practical and effective altruism by the Kellogg, Weingart and other foundations make laudable reading, the overall impression left by this book is of administrative incompetence and pusillanimity.

Plutocrats like W. M. Keck, J. D. MacArthur or W. L. Moody were men of manipulative sadism, sustained in their long lives by the distress and emotional disturbance which they inflicted on all around them. In their treatment of their family and associates, they were neo-Hohenzollerns, and in their testamentary dispositions created foundations which were "continuously embroiled in controversy, litigation and scandal" and "miserrably deficient" in philanthropy. Sadism and psychological destruction are the dominating themes of both Lacey and Nielsen. The American corporate culture, and by extension its philanthropic expression seem as heartless, arbitrary and inefficient as old Prussia. North America's super-rich, like the Hohenzollerns, seem to have hinted for hate's sake.

## Lacking a fresh start

Peter Marshall

ELAINE FORMAN CRANE  
A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island, in the Revolutionary Era  
Fordham University Press. \$25.  
0823211118

Although grandiose nineteenth-century summer residences and a present-day prominence as a yachting centre testify to awareness of its existence beyond the bounds of Rhode Island, Newport's claim to inclusion on the very short list that can be compiled of urban communities in colonial British America has seemed to require explanation. Carl Bridenbaugh's pioneering studies, while demonstrating the port's right to be considered alongside Boston and New York, Philadelphia and Charleston, invited further investigation of the causes and context of Newport's puzzling eminence. Elaine Forman Crane's account, together with Lynne Withey's recent study of the growth, in the early period, of Newport and Providence, undertakes a closer inspection of the maritime factors that proved the town's making and undoing. Independence did not bring additional material benefits and prospects to all Americans, as the commercial decline of Newport was to demonstrate.

Newport's failure to grow into an industrial metropolis was not surprising: both site and

hinterland presented insuperable obstacles to the transformation of a seaport severely damaged by both sides in the course of the Revolution. The town's initial expansion is explained by Dr Crane in terms of the activities and consequences of its maritime commerce. Expediency, rather than systematic development, characterized this progress: Newport merchants and their ships took full advantage of imperial opportunities or, if it promised greater benefits, evaded imperial restraints. Local prosperity in the colonial years derived not from superior goods or limited markets but from a willingness to trade, far or near, in whatever offered a profit. The African slave trade constituted the most striking, though subsequently deplored, example of this determination to succeed. The business of Newport was not dominated by rum, molasses and Blacks, but their presence was reflected both in the composition of the population and in the extent of commercial enterprise.

The outcome of revolutionary conflict and the winning of independence was the division of the mercantile community of Newport; the trade of both Loyalists and Patriots was equally and fatally impaired. Redress could not be provided by a shift of emphasis. The town did not possess the resources of Boston or New York and, unlike Providence, lacked civic leadership of a quality sufficient to create a fresh start in a new nation. The end of Empire marked an end to its Newport commerce; all that lay ahead was the industry of leisure.

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# Dead meat in the wrong place

E. S. Turner

DAVID HAMILTON  
The Monkey Gland Affair  
155pp. Claito and Windus. £11.95.  
0701130210

In 1927 a Hungarian insurance company refused to pay out an old-age annuity on the grounds that the policy-holder, having undergone a monkey-gland transplant by Dr Serge Voronoff, was younger than his real age. This, writes David Hamilton, was "perhaps the ultimate compliment" to the Voronoff operation; though it seems to have been the publicity-eager doctor who launched the story.

The monkey-gland nonsense was as much part of the Twenties as Couéism, pogo sticks and the Ancient Order of Frothblowers. By the Thirties the game was up and Voronoff was made the scapegoat for an episode of "poor science". But, as Dr Hamilton (himself a transplant surgeon) points out, the Russian-born doctor was by no means alone in carrying out his notorious transplant; the others later covered up their tracks and their obituaries preserved a decent silence. Voronoff suffered because he had been the greatest attention-seeker. In Hamilton's view he was no common quack; and he was certainly not the first medical researcher to wander up a blind alley.

Nor was he the first to perform his opera-

tion. In 1919, in San Quentin Prison in California, the testicles of an executed murderer were transplanted into a prematurely aged sixty-year-old inmate. Similar grafts followed and press releases used to comment on the good performance of the restored patients at the annual prison sports. Such operations raised what the author calls "a number of ethical pseudo-problems", as when the French newspaper *L'Oeuvre* asked whether it was morally right to extend the sentence of a "lifer", thus prolonging his punishment.

Voronoff, who had a respectable medical background, did not turn to rejuvenation until he was in his mid-fifties. As he had married an oil heiress, he had no financial motive to do so. His first experiments were conducted on rams. The famous "before and after" photographs of Old Ram No 12 showed a creature which, before its operation, had been "in a pliable state of old age... suffering from trembling and incontinence"; it had later fathered a fine vigorous lamb.

There were old rams in dinner-jackets who fancied such a transformation. Voronoff chose monkeys as "donors" because they were closest to man. Grafts were applied from testicle to testicle and invariably failed, but suggestibility, self-delusion and self-advertisement proclaimed the operation a success. As a trenchant anti-vivisectionist, Dr Walter Hadwen, pointed out, the graft was simply "a piece of dead meat put in the wrong place".

Voronoff, based in Paris, was backed by the

government-run Collège de France. In London he attended an international congress of surgeons which was welcomed by the Prince of Wales. The introductory remarks of Neville Chamberlain "must have pleased the monkey-grafter", for in lauding the surgical profession the Minister of Health said: "Anyone who by reason of bodily infirmity is not able to make his full contribution to the service of the community is a drone, a parasite, a burden, instead of a source of wealth and strength." However, Voronoff to his displeasure was never allowed to practise in Britain, though we are told that three British surgeons, all named, performed his operation. The *British Medical Journal* was far from hostile to Voronoff, but the *Lancet* stayed sceptical. Eventually it was a British investigative team which put in an unenthusiastic report on Voronoff's sheep-grafting activities in Algeria, on which high hopes of increased wool production were based. "It is hardly flattering to European clinical science that the follies of human gland-grafting were largely exposed by veterinary surgeons," says the author.

Meanwhile America had the quack John R. Brinkley, the goat-gland specialist, who touted for custom over his own radio station in Kansas and became immensely rich (the chose goats because they were associated with sexual prowess and perhaps because they had fewer friends than monkeys). This unfairly forgotten humbug came close to being elected Governor of Kansas.

As a doctor, the author is more interested in medical aspects than in "ethical pseudo-problems", which laymen rather enjoy. Hereports some of the outcry raised at the perceived possibility of breeding supermen and the general irresponsibility of medical research; a foretaste of more recent rows over genetic engineering. Could monkey genes poison the human race? Bernard Shaw typically said it would be a good thing if humanity could be infused with some of the better simian characteristics. Could criminal traits be transmitted by using felons' testicles? And so on. We learn how novelists embraced the monkey-gland theme, but there is no mention of Aldous Huxley's *After Many a Summer*, in which the secret of longevity is raw carp-gut (carp being noted for longevity).

Some odd nuggets of information lurk in these pages. On akin grafting in the 1920s, Hamilton writes: "A steady supply of foreskins from circumcised human beings found its way to be put ineffectively on other humans' burns and ulcers."

The author of this entertaining enquiry suggests that interest in rejuvenation followed naturally from World War One — "the well-off families had lost their sons and older men grudged their age more acutely than usual." Also, it was well known that the European birth-rate was in decline. But it would be difficult to show that the clients of Voronoff and Brinkley were motivated by a high-souled desire to replenish the earth.

## From Ackee to zygote

J. F. Watkins

JOHN WALTON, PAUL B. DEESON and RONALD DODLEY SCOTT (Editors)  
The Oxford Companion to Medicine  
Volume One. A-M.  
Volume Two. N-Z.  
1,524pp. Oxford University Press. £55.  
019611917

All who are addicted to looking things up will relish the two-volume *Oxford Companion to Medicine*. A superficial, random examination revealed the following specimens: Calvin was as handy with the matchbox as any Dominican, in that he was responsible, in 1553, for the incineration of Miguel Servet, a Spanish physician who disagreed with Galen; those who eat the fruit of the Jamaican tree *Blighia sapida* will develop the disease Ackee; Joseph Ignace Guillotin did not invent the guillotine.

A more profound examination disclosed that the work has been composed in three parts (in the contrapuntal sense). The upper voice is a very efficient medical dictionary with entries

ranging from the staccato (Cestode; tapeworm); Flattosis; bad breath; Climax; orgasm) to passages of several hundred words celebrating important diseases, anatomical and physiological terms and the like. I could find no obvious errors in the definitions, but it seems slightly wayward to give the Salk polio vaccine an entry of its own and demote the Sabin vaccine (the oral vaccine, given on a lump of sugar) to a mention under the general heading "Vaccines". These short articles are sufficiently technical for the medical reader, but will be comprehensible to those without medical knowledge if they follow the trail of starred cross-references. The *Companion* makes manifest the truth that medicine has no intellectual content (in the sense that, say, quantum mechanics has intellectual content), but is an assemblage of facts, near-facts and anecdotes which doctors draw upon in diagnosis and treatment. There is nothing in the subject that cannot be understood by anyone who looks up the meanings of a sufficient number of words.

The second voice of the *Companion* consists of short biographies of eminent doctors and of various notables who have been involved with medicine, sometimes only superficially;

Bertolt Brecht gets in because he spent a year studying medicine in Vienna. By what logic, then, did the editors exclude Christopher Isherwood who also spent a year studying medicine? Nor is there any reference to Ludwig Wittgenstein, who worked for a time as a hospital porter. The editors have avoided the problem of provoking bitterness and envy by limiting the biographical entries to the dead and a few selected gods. The space allotted to entries is not proportional to the importance of the subjects. Apollo rates only five lines, while his son, Aesculapius, has eighteen. Pasteur scores forty-eight lines, the same as Sir William Osler; but then, Pasteur was not medically qualified. In spite of a few trivial blemishes, these entries make up an excellent dictionary of international medical biography.

It is the third voice, however, that confers on the *Companion* its magisterial quality. About 150 signed articles, of varying length, have been provided by a panel of 139 illuminati, including thirty-nine from the United States and five from Canada. The Anglo-American character of the contributions is evident in the doubling of many articles (eg Armed Forces, Dentistry, Government and Medicine, Law

and Medicine), the first article describing the British situation, the second the American. Most of the subjects are treated historically, ending with concise but thorough accounts of the present position, and most articles give a bibliography. All the contributions display the virtues, not too rare among medical people, of courtesy and sobriety. "Alternative" medicine, for example, is not savaged, but simply downgraded to "fringe" medicine, under which heading coldly factual accounts are given of the claims of unorthodox practitioners. Judgment is veiled and oblique: under "charlatan" we have "see fringe medicine"; under "radiesthesia" appears the story of the hen found to be suffering from malaria, cancer and two kinds of venereal disease when a drop of its blood was tested in the diagnostic box.

Apart from some trivial complaints, *The Oxford Companion to Medicine* is almost faultless. It fills a huge gap in the ranks of essential reference books, and will be of great use to the medical profession, writers, journalists, politicians, civil servants, philosophers and priests. To future medical historians it will be as valuable as the Tetrabiblion of Aetius of Amida would have been to us, had it survived.

## Stories of the sick

Ludmilla Jordanova

ROY PORTER (Editor)  
Patients and Practitioners: Lay perceptions of medicine in pre-industrial society  
356pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.  
0521309158

*Patients and Practitioners* claims that there is a new history of medicine to be written — from the patient's point of view. It is certainly true, as Roy Porter points out in his introduction, that hitherto most historians of medicine have unashamedly adopted the point of view of the practitioner. It remains unclear, however, what historical study of the "stories of the sick" actually entails. An obvious problem is that of the source material; many of the essays in this volume use diaries, letters and popular publications. In some cases important and compelling historical arguments are built upon such evidence, as by Jonathan Borry in his study of eighteenth-century Bristol, but in others it yields merely anecdotes and description, as in Lucinda Beier's and Joan Lane's papers. There can, then, be no sure route to the new history of medicine through the use of a particular kind of evidence.

The task of developing a conceptual

framework is more challenging. Is the project which Porter outlines to be a study of lay views of medicine in general, or of the response of certain individuals to their own suffering, or of patients as a category — three very different enterprises? If the first, will class and status play a central role in the analysis? This question is crucial because the very notion of "lay" perceptions is problematic, serving to reinforce rather than undermine the "them" and "us" approach which Porter rightly criticizes. It is ironic, therefore, that several contributors argue that the distinction between patient and practitioner was very much more fluid than we have been led to believe. The use of "lay" to mean "non-professional" is a nineteenth-century innovation, and it is misleading to apply it to a commodity (medical advice) which was largely a matter of trade, by extension from the unbridgeable divide in the Church between the anointed and their secular brethren. As some of the papers here point out, the status of the patient was a crucial variable in his or her relationship with the practitioner. The single category "lay" collapses the very distinctions upon which societies are built.

Yet a number of contributors indicate exciting new avenues, especially Barry. In his rich and subtle paper, he builds his arguments

around the diary of a Bristol accountant, William Dyer, which reveals him as both patient and practitioner, as pietist, as businessman, as public figure and as natural philosopher. Barry shows how a detailed case-study can shed light on larger historical problems: in this instance, the decline of magic, the schism between elite and popular culture, the nature of eighteenth-century religion, and the development of science and medicine during the Enlightenment. He carefully avoids the trap of making unwarranted generalizations on the basis of a single idiosyncratic source, while managing to use the wide range of material. A local study provides to show how complex Dyer's activities and beliefs were. Barry moves from specific details of Dyer's own therapeutic practices to wider networks of divines and natural philosophers, to reveal his elaborate beliefs.

*Patients and Practitioners* reminds us that innovations in historiography do not come easily. To point to areas of earlier neglect does not necessarily bring with it new frameworks. Tapping little-known sources will not suffice, nor does the importation of sociological terms, bringing instant illumination. There can be little justification for using a term like "sick role" — a twentieth-century sociological concept developed to explain twentieth-century medicine

and hence a double anachronism — as Beier does when speaking of Ralph Josselin. None the less this book does teach some useful lessons, since several of the contributors have explored approaches which could be more generally applied. The volume eloquently demonstrates the importance of religion in medical history and hints at the potential fruitfulness of paying closer attention to the language of medicine. Finally, it shows that historians of seventeenth and eighteenth-century medicine have much to contribute to a field increasingly dominated by nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars. Perhaps the very foreignness of the experience of sickness in earlier times will prompt a deeper understanding of what it is to be ill.

*The Fertility Handbook: A positive and practical guide* by Joseph Bellina and Joellen Wilson (393pp. Penguin. £6.95, 0 14008565 3) has been revised and a new preface to this British edition provided by Robert Newill. The book is divided into sections under such headings as: The Anatomy of Reproduction; The Investigation; The Male and Female, Check-up, and Causes and Treatment; Male and Female. There is a glossary and a useful list of addresses.

## The case for a miscarriage

Reginald Hill

PAUL FOOT  
Murder at the Farm: Who killed Carl Bridgewater?  
273pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £12.95.  
0283391658

On September 19, 1978, a thirteen-year-old newspaper boy, Carl Bridgewater, was shot dead when he interrupted a burglary at Yew Tree Farm in Staffordshire. Just over a year later three men were found guilty of the murder. Two were given life sentences; the third, Michael Hickey, aged sixteen at the time of the killing, was detained at Her Majesty's pleasure. A fourth man, Pat Molloy, who had confessed to the robbery but claimed he was not in the room when the shooting took place, was given twelve years for manslaughter.

All four men were known criminals with other charges outstanding against them at the time of the trial. The jury's verdict was unanimous. Paul Foot thinks that it was wrong. In *Murder at the Farm* he argues his case with force but without undue emotionalism. Sensationalists will find nothing here to thrill and shock except the possible revelation that once again our much vaunted, much valued system of justice has missed its way.

Nor was there much to thrill or shock in the case that the police built against the accused, based as it was entirely on circumstantial evidence and on their own alleged admissions. Of these only one, that of Molloy, was a signed confession, while Vincent Hickey, Michael's cousin, admitted to making a verbal confession

which he later withdrew. In addition, witnesses were produced who claimed to have heard the two Hickeys and Jimmy Robinson, the other accused, confess to the killing while in separate prisons awaiting trial. It is easy enough for Mr Foot to explain why men in gaol who hope for favours from their captors should lie about a fellow prisoner. One of these hearsay witnesses is discredited in the book, and, since it was written, another of them has come forward to admit that he was lying. But to explain why the accused men should have lied about themselves in such a matter is more difficult. In the case of Molloy it is suggested that he agreed to make his statement out of fury at being falsely implicated by Vincent's verbal admission, and in the hope, later realized, of escaping the actual murder charge. Subsequently, he was to allege that he was forced into the confession by mistreatment, both physical and mental, while being questioned.

As for Vincent, we are told that by implicating himself in a crime for which he was not responsible he hoped to persuade the police to be lenient towards him in another case where there was no doubt of his guilt. Stated thus baldly, it sounds hard to believe. But one of the many fascinations of Foot's book is the insight it gives us into the lives and thought processes of professional criminals. They diverge so far from accepted standards that one is tempted to wonder if an "ordinary" jury can ever give them a "fair" trial, especially where the evidence is purely circumstantial. And if the quirks of the criminal mind do not raise these doubts, then those of the police and legal mind as shown here certainly should.

Foot claims that of twenty-four witnesses

## From the social vacuum

Iain Bamforth

JAMES BALDWIN  
Evidence of Things Not Seen  
125pp. Michael Joseph. £8.95.  
0718127161

The title of James Baldwin's latest essay, derived from St Paul, is suspended neatly between the mystical and the legal. There, however, it leaves us dangling awkwardly. While Baldwin's interest in *Evidence of Things Not Seen* is to the ambiguously united states of which he has been an exiled observer for some decades, and what is subjugated there in the name of Freedom, he nevertheless purports to tell us the history of one man and a rash of child murders that took place a few years ago in Atlanta, Georgia. A twenty-three-year-old black, Wayne Bertram Williams, was arrested, tried and convicted; although initially charged with the murder of the last two victims, he was "assumed" to be guilty of the previous twenty-six killings. It was this assumption of guilt on the part of a largely black administration and judiciary, and the attempts of the prosecution to demonstrate a repetitive criminality, that appear to have first aroused Baldwin's interest.

So far so good. But, alas, motives become awry and disconnected. What we read gives no insight into the psychology of such a person — "I had not the faintest notion of what impelled a man to murder children" — nor, more crucially, why a black man in a perverted exultation of self-hatred, should murder his own kind. Instead, we read a cursory biography and some second-hand opinions, while Baldwin gets on with the more serious business of feeding the liberal conscience, something which by now must be almost second nature. In the enduring Christian transformation of classical rhetoric, which explicitly identifies itself with all men and which allows all human suffering to encroach upon the sacred, Baldwin has, ironically and paradoxically — since he often berates it as the corrupt instrument of the white — found the true impulse of his language.

On that premise alone, one must judge that this book has misled itself, and us. Apocalyptic outcry is no substitute for understanding. Empiricism (let alone mere forensics) is defeated by some spectacular haranguing in the high style. That unmistakable purity, somewhere between the visceral and the sub-

lime, which surged through *The Fire Next Time*, has become aulled, and its precision of thought misdirected. At this kind of diatribe the liberal conscience simply wrings its hands, and forgets. One completes the book unwillingly stunned by its pomp, and unsure whether Baldwin believes in the guilt of Williams (whose character leaves the text without an identifiable trace of humanity) even as a double murderer, or whether he attributes a larger guilt to a larger "society", thereby rendering the guilt of Williams insignificant.

That is not to say that *Evidence of Things Not Seen* is without worth. In many respects Baldwin clarifies the redemptive vision which has pursued him over a lifetime in its simple and Christian essentials. Its force is love — a love which has little to do with the convention that still animates our culture — which requires us, not to forget, but to recognize what we do not remember.

The moral vacuum of any society immediately creates an actual social chaos. This vacuum is that space of confusion in which the word is not fitted to the action, nor intended to be — in which the action is not fitted to the word, nor intended to be. It is that space in which everyone helplessly has something to hide, in which every man's hand — helplessly — is against his brother: that space in which we dare not recognize that our birthright is to love each other.

These are the true colours of Baldwin's disposition, and when he touches them, he bays convincingly. He is particularly gifted at illuminating linguistic bias — he cites the word "discovery" as an example of history precalculated by the colonies — and the subtle legerdemain with which language beguiles reality. His assault, then, is properly on the imagination imprisoned in its own liberty, its myopic self-righteousness, and its thoughtless pride of territory. But while we fiddle as Rome burns, Baldwin owes it to himself to sternly regard the origins of his righteous wrath and to lend a little grace to his subject.

*The Encyclopedia of Modern Murder, 1962-1983*, first published in 1983 and now issued in paperback (370pp. Pan. £3.95, 0 330 28299 9), is edited by Colin Wilson and Donald Seaman. An introductory essay by Wilson is followed by an "A-Z of Murderers, Terrorist Organizations and Victims". It begins with Jack Henry Abbott, the protégé of Norman Mailer, and ends with Zodiac, a "Californian mass murderer who, at the time of writing, is still unidentified". The book includes a bibliography, a name index and a classified index.



Michael Hickey and Vincent Hickey protesting their innocence on the roof of Long Lartin prison four years after they were sentenced. This photograph is taken from the book reviewed here.

who saw cars and/or people near the farm on the afternoon of the murder, only ten of them, whose statements could somehow or other be made to fit the police case, were called. He further claims that evidence to support the defendants' alibis was overlooked or ignored; that the defence lawyers were not given access to all the statements which might have assisted them; and that the prosecution did all it could to keep witnesses whose evidence might be challenged from actually appearing in court. Indeed, the more of *Murder at the Farm* that one reads, the more one feels what a good press is given to the law by crime novels; in them its guardians are frequently presented as being capable of rational thought, imaginative insight, and intellectual honesty.

So, does Foot prove his case? After all, he even offers an alternative perpetrator against

whom there seems to be at least as much evidence as against the condemned men. If anything, it seems to me he almost proves it too well, leaving me wondering how on earth a trial jury, the Court of Appeal, and the Home Office can have been so wrong. Surely, comes the response, they can't have been, not again. Surely there must be vast flaws in Foot's apparently well-reasoned, apparently meticulously researched, and certainly soberly and persuasively written account.

If there are such flaws, then someone in authority ought to point them out quickly. One of those concerned, Pat Molloy, has already died in prison. The Hickey cousins are both being treated for mental disorder. It is not only hanging which can put the wrongly convicted out of the reach of pardon. Mr Foot has presented a case that must be answered.

"A truly outstanding achievement.... With this book Gustafson emerges as the leading Tolstoy scholar in the Western world."  
— R. L. Jackson, Yale University

## Leo Tolstoy

Resident and Stranger

Richard F. Gustafson

"I feel that I am perishing — that I am living and dying, that I love life and fear death — how can I be saved?" Driven between alternating periods of alienation and belonging, Tolstoy searched desperately for faith. Much of what was central to him seems embarrassing to Western and Soviet critics, points out Richard Gustafson in his absorbing argument for the predominance of Tolstoy's religious viewpoint in all his writings. Received opinion says that there are two Tolstoys, the pre-conversion artist and the post-conversion religious thinker and prophet; but Professor Gustafson argues convincingly that the man is not two, but one. \$29.50

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## Teasing it out

Anne Chisholm

NANCY MITFORD  
A Talent to Annoy: Essays, journalism and reviews  
Edited by Charlotte Mosley  
217pp. Hamish Hamilton. £12.50.  
0241 119162

As Nancy Mitford wrote to Evelyn Wrought in 1956: "I mean really we've had enough - even I have and you know how one loves one's own jokes." She was writing about the U and Non-U debate she had launched with an article in *Encounter* the previous year, but by now it is tempting to apply her characteristically sharp remark to the entire Mitford bandwagon. It begins to seem unfair that Nancy, who dreaded boredom, should be turned into a bore post-humously by the efforts of her admirers and relations. This selection of her journalism comes too hard on the heels of last year's humper crop of Mitfordiana. It is edited by a daughter-in-law of her sister Lady Mosley.

A Talent to Annoy will probably mean little to readers unfamiliar with Nancy Mitford's life and writings. It demonstrates that she found her voice early, in her twenties, and developed and exploited it with considerable professionalism and cunning. In this she was helped by Wrought, himself an expert in getting and giving good value. The early pieces reprinted here, from *Vogue* and *The Lady*, are flimsy but confident: a report on a society wedding ("the average wedding present is a horror"); an attack on the ritual of a point-to-point ("the alliance of piercing cold with agonising boredom"); and a genuinely funny, if schoolgirlish, account of a Wagner evening at Covent Garden ("each of the women was supported by four strong ropes. As they lunged about in the air (or water) they sang loudly. A sort of toad

creeping on the rocks sang loudly too").

Nancy Mitford's journalism, like her fiction and historical writings, was derived from her personal experience as well as her instinctive likes and dislikes. She hated the cold, English philistinism, bourgeois taste, bridge and sport. She liked elegance, wit, gossip and family jokes. Her love for everything French and of the distinguished French Gaullist and philosopher Gaston Palewski dominated her later life and writing, though he only appears here anonymously.

She needed the money she earned from writing, and she knew what she was worth. An editor who she thought underpaid her in 1930 "in spite of having my name and all" was called "a stingy old thing", and later she made sure that *Encounter* paid her double their usual rate for the U and Non-U piece (relentlessly reprinted here). She kept a sharp eye on the rates she got from the *Sunday Times* in the 1950s and 60s. Her columns from Paris, commissioned by Ian Fleming as Foreign Manager, re-read moderately well; she had the knack of combining serious bits of cultural or political information with inside gossip. In 1952 she irritated many readers by writing from Rome that the city was much like an English village and that the basilica of St Peter, "seen from the colonnade, is very much like a lesser country house". This tease seems not so much annoying as inaccurate, but it was the sort of thing she could get away with.

The most curious, and perhaps for future onlookers of the Mitford idiom, the most revealing item, is the last, a diary of the *événements* in Paris in 1968 that appeared (oddly enough) in the *New Statesman*. She was amused rather than alarmed by the drama; she renamed the student leader "Cohn Bondit" and ascribed the young revolutionaries' behaviour to the laxity of their mothers. As the famous Mitford Nanny, Blor, used to say to her: "Very silly, darling."

## Paper lamb

Alexander Chancellor

FRANK GILES  
Sundry Times  
256pp. John Murray. £13.95.  
07195 42898

Whenever Frank Giles's name is mentioned, it tends to be followed by an anecdote. This comes in various versions, but here, in his memoirs, Giles, a former *Times* foreign correspondent and former Editor of the *Sunday Times*, gives us "the only true one". The year was 1950. Giles had been appointed *The Times*'s correspondent in Italy and had gone out to Rome ahead of his wife Kitty "to find a flat and put down some roots".

The week before she was due to arrive, a new friend at the American Embassy telephoned to invite me to dinner at some future date. I explained that my wife would be here by then. "But of course," he said hospitably, "we shall expect Mrs Giles too." I thought quickly, Kitty, as an Earl's daughter (her father was Earl De La Warr), had the courtesy title of Lady Kitty, and was generally known as such. We were probably going to be in Rome for some years. Would it not be better to avoid possible future embarrassments by getting things straight from the start? Yes, it would, I decided, so I said to my friend, "You won't mind my mentioning it, I hope, but actually she's not Mrs Giles..." Before I had had time to complete the sentence, he had burst out, "But of course, I quite understand, that makes no difference, you must bring her all the same."

This quotation can only reveal a touching innocence: first, in Giles's desire to authenticate a story that made him appear so absurd that most people had assumed it to be an invention; second, in his seeming surprise that for thirty-five years people had continued to find it worth retelling. After reading this, one is even tempted to believe another, much more recent, anecdote, about his dismissal in 1983 as Editor of the *Sunday Times*. His proprietor, Rupert Murdoch, attempted to soften the blow by offering him the title of "Editor Emeritus". "A title", Giles is supposed to have said, "devoid of meaning, which I am nearly sure he invented on the spur of the moment". According to instant Fleet Street folklore, Giles then asked Murdoch what "Emeritus" meant. "E" means "you're out", the Australian is said to have

replied, "and 'meritus' means you deserve it." Alas, this story cannot be true; for if it were, we can be certain that Giles would have retold it in his book.

For, despite his undoubted ability and intelligence, Giles is surprisingly innocent. He is also a cheerful, enthusiastic and even-tempered man. The book is a chronological account of his professional life (with the exception of childhood reminiscences, it is devoid of any insights into his family life; his three children, to whom the book is dedicated, are not discussed at all).

Born in 1919, Giles was only ten years old when his father died suddenly, leaving his mother an impoverished widow. She managed to send him to a public school (Wellington College), from which in due course he won an open scholarship in history to Brasenose College, Oxford, where he was, so he tells us, blissfully happy. "It was all I wanted or could have dreamt of."

He never doubted that, if he had stayed at Oxford, he would have got a First; but the Second World War intervened, and his guardian, Major-General Sir Denis Bernard, who had just been appointed Governor of Bermuda, asked Giles to accompany him there as his ADC. Twenty years old, without worldly experience, apart from the "work, fun and friendship" he had known at Oxford, he set sail across the Atlantic feeling "not especially depressed or even apprehensive". "Nothing", he says, "seemed to bother or surprise me."

This enviable quality - an immunity to worry - seems to have accompanied him throughout his life. Only three incidents in his career seem to have caused him any serious distress. The first, and most crucial, was his failure, in 1945, to pass the examination for permanent entry into the Foreign Office ("Instead of the glowing prospects which I had supposed to lie ahead, suddenly there was 'nothing'"). The other two came right at the end of his subsequent career as a journalist: his involvement, as Editor of the *Sunday Times*, in the fiasco of the publication of the forged Hitler diaries, and his dismissal by Murdoch (though this last setback, he says, was a shock only "in the sense of something immediately unexpected").

His rejection by the Foreign Office, followed

## Servant to royals

Isabel Colegate

DUFF HART-DAVIS (Editor)  
End of an Era: Letters and journals of Sir Alan Lascelles from 1887 to 1920  
348pp. Hamish Hamilton. £15.  
0241 11960 X

Sir Alan Lascelles died in 1981 at the age of ninety-four, having been Assistant Private Secretary to Edward VIII when Prince of Wales, then to George V, Edward VIII again as King, and George VI. He was Private Secretary to the latter from 1943 to 1952, and to the present Queen for the first year of her reign. The diaries and letters which have now been edited by Duff Hart-Davis in *End of an Era* come from the years before the Royal service began. They begin when Tommy Lascelles, as he was nearly always known from his earliest youth, was eleven, in 1898, and they take him up to his return from India in 1920; he had been acting as ADC to his brother-in-law the Governor of Bombay, and he had met and married Joan Thesiger, the daughter of the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. Almost on the last page of the book his doubts and indecisions about what he should do for a career are ended by an unofficial approach from the Prince of Wales through their mutual friend Lady Elcho.

Growing up as an insider in the heyday of aristocratic privilege, Lascelles's childhood was secure though not entirely happy. His mother died before he was four, and though he was devoted to his older sisters and a dutiful son to his father (a younger brother of the fifth Earl of Harewood), his relations with his father were not always easy. In later life he wrote that his father's influence had been mostly negative. "From him I got, by reaction, my horror of crossness and of making a fuss over the inevitable speeding of small sums of money by one's dependants." He also got his passion for

hunting and his fastidious dislike for any kind of personal publicity.

Tommy Lascelles would have liked to have been a writer, but perhaps his personal preference precluded it; he confined his literary efforts to his diaries and to his letters, in particular those he wrote to his sisters and to Lady Guendolen Osborne, the beautiful, witty, but fragile daughter of the Duke of Leeds, with whom he corresponded throughout the First World War. He wrote well; fluently, amusingly and cheerfully. Some of his longer descriptions of social events or sporting occasions have great charm and verve. When he began his Oxford diary he wrote that he intended to set down whatever interested him and not what he thought would interest others. What interested him at Oxford was friendship. Unlike nearly all of the friends he made there, he had spent his school days not at Eton but at Marlborough, where he was not at all happy; perhaps for that very reason his reaction to life at Oxford was spontaneous and unspoilt. His appetite for life seems never to have faded, even when he was unlucky in love - though here the diary is discreet - or when exhausted by the exigencies of the London social round, or when his finances became more than usually precarious. He was not rich. Gambling helped him to pay his way through Oxford, but afterwards he had to take a job in a stockbroker's office, which he did not enjoy, and after the First World War his marriage was only made possible by the generosity of his uncle, the immensely rich Lord Harewood.

The wartime letters are discreet and stoical, but contain some interesting descriptions. Perhaps typically, there is no account of the action after which he was awarded a Military Cross. As a cavalry officer in the Bedfordshire Yeomanry he had to spend most of the period frustratingly in reserve while on appalling numbers of his friends were killed in action. He never lost his belief in the justice of the war, but found himself unable to rejoice over it at the end. "At the gathering of this stupendous harvest, too many of the sowers were not there. Even when you win a war, you cannot forget that you have lost your generation."

While he was in India, and between the excitement of discovering the beautiful country of Kashmir and the astonishment of finding himself at last wholeheartedly in love, Lascelles, always an enthusiastic reader, was impressed by a first reading of John Massfield's *Reynard the Fox*; it inspired him to write to his sister a long and interesting account of why, despite being "more of a non-Philistine than a Philistine", he considered fox-hunting to be of a very high order of experience. Among other things he wrote that hunting had been a peculiarly English feature of "this pleasant age, whose abrupt end I fear you will have already seen - what one might call the Age of the Country Gentleman, extending from about 1750 to 1914; not a worse age than any other, and, at any rate, ours". On the evidence of this volume, he was, at least until his thirties, a man of his age. Without particularly questioning the assumptions of his time, or of his class, he seems to have lived within them with a generosity of spirit and a natural chivalry which would have graced any set of views; his diaries and letters make an attractive contribution to the social history of the period.

ing an intoxicating spell as a temporary Private Secretary to two Foreign Secretaries: Anthony Eden and Ernest Bevin, must have been a heavy blow to a young man, so confident of his own intellectual abilities, determined on a diplomatic career. But he reveals he was not to be dejected for long. In May 1946, he joined the staff of *The Times* and pursued a career not dissimilar to that of a diplomat: as a foreign correspondent in Paris and Rome. His account of these years is less than enthralling; his observations on French and Italian politics tend to the conventional. But we are offered a picture of an amiable, hospitable and gregarious man. He was not a journalist in the investigative or crusading mould; rather he always relished the opportunities offered by his job to meet and converse with the great men and women of the age.

Early on in life, Giles was impressed by "the tonic effect of good manners in everyday dealings". But good manners do not make for stimulating memoirs. The most malicious revelation in the whole book is that the Duke of Windsor (spied on by Giles while taking a shower in Bermuda) "had absolutely no hair on his body, even in places where one would most expect it to be".

## Luminary

Headmaster's study: brass-knobbed Victorian  
inlaid Morocco desk of mahogany;  
antimacassar leather armchair,  
waxy refulgence of polished volumes...

I was about 12, must have been '58,  
when I was vouchsafed secular ecstasy  
(some misdemeanour, farting / Lord's Prayer) -  
suddenly, bruise-clouded winter evening.

beamed an oblique shaft, apricot, genial,  
through a grim dull pane onto the luminous  
Axminster, cheery, spring-piled spectrum,  
rendering misery worldly, nothing.

PETER READING

## Shuddering in the carapace

Alexander Walker

DIRK BOGARDE  
Backcloth  
313pp. Viking. £12.95.  
067081327

Dirk Bogarde might have called the most recent volume of his autobiography *A Private Man*. Instead, *Backcloth* is the title. No matter, it amounts to the same thing: backcloths cover up, too. Although the story is up-dated to last year, with the reclusive author, now sixty-six, dangerously exposed to a D.Litt. honorary degree at St Andrews, most of it is a recycling of the earlier three volumes, the scraps of left-over life at all ages which can now be arranged without much dating, placing or even naming of names. A pattern of melancholy stoicism emerges: the Hampstead childhood with "pretend" uncles and aunts; the all-too-brief sojourn in rural Twickenham; schooling in cheerful, cheerful Glasgow; the war; "military policeman" duties in what became Indonesia; the farmhouse in Provence; a film with Glenda Jackson; the deaths of dogs and

friends; the "one thing at a time" feeling as life expectancy is eroded and the only virtues that remain reasonably eternal are the mucking out of the pool, the dividing up of the water-lilies (imported from Angmering) and the culling of celandines down by the cesspit.

For all its wealth of detail and directness of impression, it is not really self-revealing. Although Bogarde commands a well-bred intimacy that will please his many readers, it is the outward scene he prefers to relate to rather than the confessional. He has become a little too aware of the protective carapace he's assembled around himself: in the first book of the series, *A Postillion Struck by Lightning* (1977), it was more striking for being less conscious. More sinister, too. One recalls the teenage Bogarde picked up in a Glasgow flea-pit by a man who "knew exactly how mummies were bandaged", and demonstrated his skill on the nude mute boy back in his digs.

Instead of such disturbing episodes of trussing, this book opts for unravelling. It tells how disenchantment and death under one's protective arrangements for safe, secure living. The early family home in the Kenneth Grahame-like lushness of pre-suburban countryside is

Not that the Kennedys, as a clan, emerge with much more credit than anyone else. Senator Robert F. Kennedy's instinctive response on learning in 1968 that his sister-in-law proposed to marry Onassis was, we are told, to announce ruefully: "I guess, you know, this could cost me five states." Even more chilling, when Onassis's only son was fatally injured in a plane crash in 1973, Jackie's main preoccupation, while still keeping vigil at the bedside, seems to have been to discover from her stepson's mistress what figure her second husband had in mind for a settlement should they resolve to divorce.

Senator Edward Kennedy behaved equally true to form at Onassis's own funeral. Evans claims to have cracked the mystery as to why, on the road to the cemetery on Skopios, Onassis's sole surviving child, Christina, suddenly "high-tailed it out of the limo", leaving her father's widow alone with her brother-in-law. The senior Senator from Massachusetts had, he reveals, chosen precisely that moment to bring up "financial matters".

The fairest comment to make on this book is perhaps to say that it makes one realize just what the script-writers of *Dallas* and *Dynasty* are up against. It is not merely that the rich are different from us: it is also that they happen, by and large, to be a great deal nastier.

## Summing up

Anthony Howard

PETER EVANS  
Art: The life and times of Aristotle Socrates Onassis  
367pp. Cape. £12.95.  
0221021354

"I was just a Greek kid who knew how to do his sums" - so said Aristotle Onassis on his deathbed; but he was not always so modest. Only a few months earlier in the men's room of the Crazy Horse Saloon in Paris he had embarrassed even a paparazzo by placing his penis on the saucer normally kept for tips and then belittling out: "There it is. That says it all. Sex and money - that is my secret."

It wasn't, of course. If Onassis had a secret, it was his ability to mix absolute single-mindedness with total unscrupulousness. The little Greek boy from Smyrna may have come up the hard way but any blows that life dealt him he was to return with compound interest. His first wife, Tina Niarchos, described him as "a rehabilitated savage" - but, in the light of this book, doubts only linger over her choice of qualifying adjective.

Peter Evans, an experienced Fleet Street journalist, seems initially to have been engaged to write the authorized biography (Onassis, apparently, not having been wholly satisfied with an earlier effort at the same genre produced by the late Willi Frischauer). He had, his subject informed him, "one hell of a story" - and, for once, Onassis was telling the truth. It has taken Evans almost a dozen years to piece it together, his early contacts with the Great Man having first been interrupted by his subject's marriage to the widow of the former President of the United States and then abruptly terminated by his death in Paris on March 17, 1975.

At least, though, the intervening years have freed Mr Evans from any inhibitions. What we have here is Onassis in the raw and in the buff. He had, reported those who swam with him on his island retreat of Skopios, a body "like an animal" - and Evans has, in fact, contrived to write an up-to-date version of *The Jungle Book*. They are all there - from the kings of the forest, like Churchill and Kennedy, to the frail family cubs who got trodden underfoot.

It is a gripping, if hardly an inspiring, story: no one emerges as commanding much sympathy, unless it be Maria Callas who took the remorseless succession of blows Onassis inflicted upon her with what can only seem an astonishing stoicism. For the rest, the predominant reaction has to be that they all somehow deserved each other - though there can perhaps be a mite of pity for the ruthlessly exploited, senile Winston Churchill who became, much against his wife's will, a fixture on the Onassis yacht. (He was at least better treated than the young Senator John F. Kennedy, who, on the one occasion he was invited on board, was told to make sure that he took himself off before dinner was served.)

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eventually marooned in the acres of a housing estate; likewise Bogarde's French farm, where nightingales sang on his moving in and peasants picked the roses de mai for the perfume factories, lost its bird-song and its scents as Sloanes and Arnolds marched up the valley towards him and the locals went down into Cannes and Nice to operate the cash registers at Monoprix. Yet "dropping in" on him is the worst of sins still: there's a funny, icy account of one Suane who tries.

He himself once sticks his head far enough out of his shell to serve as President of the Jury at the Cannes film festival (not "President of the Festival", as the hook has it) and with a restrained shudder at the vulgarity of it all he blows the gaff on prize-giving. Eventually, his

## Machismo, my son

John Ure

VICTOR PERERA  
Rites: A Guatemalan boyhood  
194pp. Deutsch. £8.95.  
0231979778

Autobiography has been said to have two main objectives: first, to illuminate the period and surroundings in which the subject lived; and second, to illuminate the character of the subject himself - an illumination which, at best (as Proust has proved), can throw light on the whole human condition. But childhood reminiscences are particularly liable to miss both main objectives and to wallow in a vague nostalgia that throws little real light either on the times or on the author's inner self.

Victor Perera's description of his Guatemalan childhood triumphantly avoids the pitfalls of such trite nostalgia and makes a genuine contribution to the two objectives defined above: one closes this short book with a sharpened perception not only of life in mid-twentieth-century Guatemala but of life in Latin America as a whole; and one also understands something of the emotional dilemma of the son of a Jewish family brought up in Central America under the twin pressures of Judaism and Latin machismo.

As becomes a former editor of the *New Yorker*, Perera demonstrates a lively wit on almost every page of his engaging memoir. His parents' courtship is described as being conducted "entirely by mail - surface mail at that". His cosseted mother is reported as having been "passed in trust from one doting hand to another... like a family heirloom". His school-friend's tough and frightening father is

house becomes a hospice. Friends like "Tony" Forwood, his long time manager-companion, or Norah Smallwood, the sometime chateleine of Chitto and Windus, his first publisher and the nine (there's a fair bit of snobbery in the book), are nursed back to health there or eased into their passing later on in some grim English wind where not even Bogarde's characteristic gesture of offering to nip over to the Courtauld for some "very small, very thin" smoked salmon sandwiches can raise the spirits. One recalls from the first volume of memoirs that a lost tortoise was found stuck by its shell down a hole in the meadow - but the termites had eaten it till only the shell remained. *Backcloth* is a sombre reminder that one's end is indeed in one's beginning.

identified as having "the smile of a man who keeps his threats". When one has finished the book, each major character stands permanently transfixed, pinned out in a collection more often of beetles than of butterflies, by some sharply delineated phrase.

But despite the wit and the lumour (there are some very funny semantic incidents that even an uninitiated gentile finds hilarious) the cumulative effect of Perera's reminiscences is saddening. The conflict between the confined Jewish family rites which prevail in his home life, and the sex-dominated Latin American outlook which dominates his school life, is never really resolved; in fact it is complicated yet further by his own obvious attraction to the all-pervading North American influence. One is not surprised that he made his eventual home neither in Israel nor in Guatemala.

And saddest of all is the effect on his circle - both family and school - of the violent tenor of Central American life. When he returns at various intervals in later life it is to find that his former playmates and relatives have fallen victims of the régime or of its opponents: "the prevailing climate made a mockery of my hardening conviction that political commitment of any kind landed one sooner or later in a hopeless predicament: the fact was, you landed there in any case". It is not only the victims that evoke his sympathy; he finds that the chilling practice of violence corrupts those whom he had once loved, but who have now lost their humanity as "the little grey shutters, like the iron screens on Jacob's shop windows, snapped shut behind (their) glazed eyes". No wonder Perera opted for the United States; but no wonder too that he recalls with tenderness the turmoil of both his surroundings and his inner life as a child.

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Pardons cowardice, conceit,  
Lays its honours at their feet.

"Time . . . worships language", he then reflected, half-ironically, "and yet the world around us was still what it was."

We discover from his essays on Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva how it is that language not only triumphs over time (something he illustrates vividly in the piece on Mandelstam) but enables the poet who listens to it intently enough to enlarge his apprehension of life in ethical terms. Akhmatova became the poet of her people, not because she had populist leanings or set out to be their deliberative mouthpiece, but because she felt instinctively the ethos of Russian folk poetry. When the Revolution came, she recognized that it would bring to an inordinate degree what was already known to the folk poetry—grief. Tsvetaeva went further in her conviction that the tragic mode is implicit in the Russian language, and she carried it in a point which the Orthodox tradition of reconciliation had kept out of reach. The sense of ambivalence, as felt in her "philosophy of discomfort", became not only the object of expression but its means as well. With the utmost brilliance she adopted the method that Brodsky ascribes to Dostoevsky, "in many ways . . . our first writer to trust the intuition of language more than his own". Tsvetaeva's poetry is merciless in its logic, unimpeded in its growth, word out of word, perception crowning perception.

When it comes to Montale and Cavafy, both of whom I suspect Brodsky, despite his extraordinary linguistic talent, knows principally through English translation, their "code of conscience" has to be surmised from what can be gathered about their time. He does indeed write very well on both, and one's initial surprise that they could be accommodated along with Tsvetaeva—particularly the reticent, even stammering Cavafy, dumb in diction and low-pulsed—soon falls away when Brodsky comments on the entire honesty of both poets. Montale has the first of the virtues attributed to Auden—autonomy, which he quietly achieved very much against the tide of Italian poetry in his youth, although Ungaretti and Saba worked to the same ends. Autonomy is no less the merit of Cavafy, situated as he was at the edge of the Hellenic world in Alexandria, re-

mote from the robust tradition of *Erotikritia*, the seventeenth-century Cretan narrative poem, and the ballads, the inventor of his own demotic, as Seferis says, and like Montale a man of the highest poetic rectitude, a stickler for the unwelcome truth.

It will have become plain that Brodsky, whatever his personal despair—and he remarks somewhere that the future is even more dreary to contemplate than the past—does not deny, but rather affirms with passion, the place of conscience in poetry. Tsvetaeva's phrase, "art in the light of conscience", appeals to him, and it can be turned round to say "conscience in the light of art". Hum on life in the twentieth century, no matter where it is lived, Brodsky would have us know, is a poor thing, and it offers no sure abiding-place upon earth. He describes Akhmatova in these terms: "She was, essentially, a poet of human ties: cherished, strained, severed." That is true of the

## A wretchedly modern woman

Lesley Chamberlain

JADWIGA KOSICKI and DANIEL GEROULD  
A Life of Solitude: Stanisław Przybyszewski—  
A biographical study with selected letters.  
239pp. Quartet. £14.95.  
0704325977

The woman whose play about Revolutionary France underlay this summer's Royal Shakespeare Company production of *The Danton Affair* led such a short, wretched life and projected such a dream of imperturbable superiority into her unsuccessful writing that one might call her a "Woman from Underground", after Dostoevsky, had she only had a little guile or malice. Her father, the Polish modernist Stanisław Przybyszewski, a devious survivor himself, neglected her from her illegitimate birth in 1901 and on the death of her mother, a minor painter, Stacha, aged eleven, already inward and intensely competitive, went to live with friends and then with an aunt. By the time she was eighteen she had had homes in Poland, France, Switzerland and Austria, knew German, French, Polish, drew,

other poets reviewed by Brodsky, as of Brodsky himself. And he continues: "She showed these evolutions first through the prism of the individual heart, then through the prism of history, such as it was."

Tsvetaeva's love for Rilke (whom she had never met and only a little while earlier had begun to communicate with) is described by Brodsky as demanding from her "maximum selflessness and maximum candour". In the greater poets of this century one can discern how the "individual heart" becomes selfless and the poet's "I" triumphantly turns into "we"; and it is, I suggest, from these poets that we can gain the full sense of what "the prism of history" means when directed to the individual life.

Brodsky may never be allowed to return to Russia. But he has brought with him to the West the most valuable thing Russia can give us—a reaffirmation of the belief that art is not,

played the violin, and was a depressive perfectionist, desperately alone with her literary ambitions.

Przybyszewski was meanwhile enjoying fame as a professional Satanic writer. His disolute life, which made him a huge success with women, had grown wings in Berlin, where he inspired jealousy in Munch and fear in Strindberg, and when he returned to Poland he was quickly acclaimed leader of the Polish modern movement. Stacha met him virtually for the first time in Cracow when she was nineteen. She fell in love with him as a literary stranger and the prodigal parent was flattered. His second wife probably rightly saw Stacha as a rival, which drove the couple to meet in secret and possibly to fulfil the prophecy of jealousy by committing incest. Certain letters of Stanisław's to her father were either destroyed by her or have been withheld. Subsequently Stacha had a nervous breakdown and cut off contact with Przybyszewski, although she continued to receive money from him and in the year of his death, 1927, was still writing letters begging him for literary introductions and criticism.

Many of the letters, which occupy two-thirds

of this volume, are on all the more painful record of Przybyszewski's chronic unhappiness because they were never sent. In 1922 he married a schoolteacher from Gdansk, and found companionship with this man who was lonely, poor and obscure as herself, but already she was a morphine addict, thanks to her father. As she struggled to turn her fascination with Büchner's play *Danton's Death* into new Polish work her husband died of a morphine overdose in Paris. She moved from their cold, dark, cramped apartment into an empty barrack cell behind the school, giving language lessons, living off her husband's legacy, and fearing her circumstances. She could tolerate only the darkness of the cinema; the morphine made her mental instability worse, and the money was running out. Her letters to her father begged for help, other notes to members of the literary establishment quoted her father's name and wrestled with her ambitions and insecurities as she pleaded for a leg-up to fame. She pursued creative writing with iron discipline because it offered the only hope of a more certain life, but she could only survive her aspirations by wildly believing herself a genius. An avowed Freudian incapable of analysing herself, she ended up living in a self-imposed concentration camp; eventually she gave up going out even to buy food and died of her addiction and malnutrition, aged thirty-four.

The cell in which Stacha lived is one of the pictures included in this utterly sad book. It records a unique story of human ambition and breakdown. Przybyszewski's three plays about the French Revolution will not secure the international reputation she sought, but her life shows up her manically social father's "modernism" as mere theory compared with her own loneliness and inner death. Her existence begs the label modern because it was so exposed, overwrought and faithless, and cluttered with exotic philosophies and far-reaching political fears. Fearing a second world war in 1927 she wrote characteristically: "I know that the purpose of man's life is to serve as a guinea pig for someone else's experiments, and thus human being will endure anything, absolutely anything."

In *The Danton Case*, a long work unsuited to the stage, Stacha gave Danton the lascivious, corruptibility she saw in her father, and Robespierre her own unflinching will and dedication. She watched Robespierre triumph hastily, but at much cost to his health. Andrzej Wajda, by shifting the balance of virtue radically in favour of Danton, made a successful film adaptation, but Pam Gems's more loyal version at the Barbican has not drawn an appreciative audience. Stacha was perhaps the character we needed to see on stage.

*Lindiscope and Literal: Unpublished letters of W. H. Hudson and George Gissing*, edited by Dennis Shruball and Pierre Coullias (131pp. Salisbury: Michael Russell. £12.95. 0839351122), contains 100 letters written by Hudson between 1887 and 1921, together with nine recently discovered letters from Gissing to Hudson. Among Hudson's correspondents are Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, John Massfield, Grant Richards, H. J. Massingham and George Gissing's younger brother, Algernon.

## Towards an overdue destiny

Christopher Thorne

RICHARD NIXON  
No More Vietnam  
240pp. W. H. Allen. £10.95.  
0491038321  
GABRIEL KOLKO  
Vietnam: Anatomy of a war, 1940-1975  
627pp. Allen and Unwin. £20.  
0049590049

The exposure and removal from office of Richard Nixon testified to the capacity of the American body politic for vigorous self-criticism and anti-authoritarianism—a capacity which the British have cause to envy. At the same time, the subsequent feting of the former president by the American Right, like the continuing reverence for his foreign-policy partner, Henry Kissinger, as a man possessed of a profound understanding of international affairs, suggests that there remains much to be self-critical about. The Watergate affair itself receives only passing mention in Nixon's latest exercise in self-justification, *No More Vietnam*, as an obstacle to the achievement of complete success in Southeast Asia. ("Some of my closest aides resigned under a darkening cloud of serious allegations and scurrilous innuendo.") The language, the attitudes, the values and priorities of the Nixon White House that were so fatefully recorded for the outside world to hear might never have been. It is a careful, caring, rational and responsible man whom we are now invited to observe ordering, for example, the essential bombing of Ha Noi and Haiphong in December 1972.

For anyone who needs to obtain further insight into the perceptions and reasoning of those supporting what Walter Dean Burnham has termed "the Reagan counterrevolution", *No More Vietnam* will be of some interest. They will learn, *inter alia*, how "the Third World War began before World War II ended"; what needless folly it was to allow the Shah to be overthrown; how, with Ronald Reagan in the White House (the language is, as ever, instructive), "America's first international losing streak has been halted"; with the invasion of Grenada "demonstrating that we could still do something on the world stage"; and how crucial it remains, as a new Soviet *Schwerpunkt* develops in Central America, for Americans fully to recover "our confidence in our ability to wield power effectively".

However, for serious students of American policy-making during the Vietnam war, familiar with such well-documented and thoughtful studies as George Herring's *America's Longest War* and *The Irony of Vietnam: The system worked* by Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts, this book is virtually worthless. The level of accuracy and analysis provided in *No More Vietnam* is indicated early on, in the statements that Winston Churchill "knew that independence for the colonies was inevitable", and that the siege of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 (where the United States, Nixon argues, should have intervened decisively and thus halted the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia) "was made possible only by the fall of Asia's largest domino—China". The United States, we are told, had "won the war in Vietnam" by the beginning of 1973, only to have that triumph thrown away by an irresponsible Congress, which prevented the further exercise of American military power in the region and fatally reduced the flow of military aid to the government of South Vietnam. Before this shameful abdication, the pacification programme had not only "worked wonders" but had created the conditions within which "we [had] won the political struggle for the allegiance of the South Vietnamese people". The military programme of Vietnamization "had worked", with Operation Lam Son 719 (the shambling entry into Laos of President Thieu's forces in February 1971, and their subsequent rout) proving "a military success". Just as American soldiers, for their part, "were not haunted by doubts about the morality of the war", so Ngo Dinh Diem (who had "understood that the first task of government is to establish order" and whose deeds were "all legitimate acts of government") had earlier succeeded in creating "a state that was substantially free". Further historical insights which the volume provides include the following treatment of the now well-documented sugges-

tion that the North Vietnamese "attack" on US ships in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 4, 1964, did not in fact take place: "I have concluded that it did and there is no credible evidence that we provoked it."

In short, were it not for the identity of the author and the worthwhile cause, in these difficult times, of saving students and libraries the expenditure of nearly £11, *No More Vietnam* would not warrant reviewing space. To say that, by contrast, Gabriel Kolko's *Vietnam: Anatomy of a war* deserves a more detailed appraisal than can be provided here is not to suggest that, unlike the disgraced ex-president, Professor Kolko provides a balanced and detached analysis of the war. He does not; and indeed his underlying assumptions, being more or less the mirror-image of Nixon's, have created a perspective and treatment that are scarcely less Manichean than the latter's. For Nixon, as for many of his fellow-countrymen, the essential goodness and nobility of the United States and its foreign-policy goals are a given. For Kolko (American imperialism being the inescapable consequence of the country's capitalist structure and dynamics, and yet being faced, after its defeat in Vietnam, with a world of widespread social change and revolt), the United States is left with no more than "the ability . . . to impose immeasurable suffering on people whose fate is arms and money cannot control". Yet just as Nixon needs to establish the antithetical evil of Communism, so too Kolko—every bit as much an American—needs to discover and proclaim his own City on the Hill: to celebrate the achievements of his own Good People in the form of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Kolko's treatment of the doings of his heroes during the years under review is manifestly partial. The widespread atrocities and killings that accompanied their land-reform programme in the North in the mid-1950s, for example, while mentioned, are played down, emphasis being placed, rather, on the regime's achievement, via its co-operative movement, of "social unity and consensus within the once bitterly divided northern peasantry". The violence employed in the South against landlords and the officials of Diem and Thieu is described—in the best Pentagon tradition—as "surgical", and "generally very popular". The butchery that took place in Hue after its capture by the Communists during the Tet offensive in 1968 is passed over in silence, as is the wretched fate after the war's end of various southerners who had fought under the aegis of Hanoi in the National Liberation Front. The struggles among factions within Hanoi itself—examined in, for example, Ralph Smith's *International History of the Vietnam War*—are for the most part glossed over. "The Revolution" is all, and indeed in Kolko's hands becomes anthropomorphized, so that it is not Ho Chi Minh or Le Duan or some wider grouping of "mortals", but "The Revolution" who/which in 1964, for example, "aw . . . immediately" the "new social dynamic" that was emerging in the South at the time, and "realized" its implications.

Kolko does not go so far as to claim that the Party was infallible. But his observation at one point that its surprise at the speed of its victory in 1975 "revealed the extent to which it had . . . misunderstood the total social dynamics of the conflict" is out of keeping with his repeated emphasis on the degree to which these "extremely careful students of social dynamics" "fully appreciated the larger context of the struggle". (Kolko's treatment of the People's Republic of China also swerves about from time to time. That country's role in Southeast Asia after 1949 is in one place described as having its roots in a thousand years of history, with Peking's attitudes towards Hanoi being criticized as shaped by selfish considerations of national interest and with American intelligence estimates being dismissed as wrongly assuming that "China's ideological pretensions" were "a crucial guide to its actions as a state". Yet, elsewhere, Nixon and Kissinger are taken to task for "passing lightly over the time-consuming reality of ideology's restraints" where Peking was concerned, and for believing that the diplomacy of Marxist-Leninist states "could be made to conform to American-defined rules".) The Vietnamese Communists, in other words, were in tune with what the author sees as the main trends and forces of

history, their "notion of the critical role of the individual" providing a "distinctive and fundamental addition to Marxist-Leninist theory and an implicit major revision of the relative importance of leaders and purely organizational forms".

Kolko's own views on the "main trends and forces of history" are thrust at the reader throughout—although here, too, his emphasis can shift quite drastically. Thus, for example, the victory of the Communist Party is at one point advanced as "testimony . . . to the malleability of history as a general process", whereas the North's generals in 1975 are depicted as being "merely . . . the players in history, but not its creators". The final collapse of the South Vietnamese régime between 1973 and 1975, Kolko explains, had become inevitable "because the movement of history had entered a cumulative phase in which all that Saigon and its enemies had done before now produced its own logic and momentum. Events were the outcome of all the preceding human decisions and actions, their collective wisdom or folly, but at this time took on a life of their own qualitatively." The United States, for its part, was bound to act as it did, being "the major inheritor of the mantle of imperialism in modern history"; and yet we are also told that it was the "momentous" decision to back Ngo Dinh Diem in 1954 that "would usher in a major phase of American history, shaped to a crucial extent by the strengths, desires and weaknesses of one man". Meanwhile, Vietnam as a whole moved on towards the realization, in 1975, of its "destiny, two decades overdue".

*Anatomy of a War* conveys as self-righteous and self-satisfied an impression of its author as does *No More Vietnam*, and its stated aim—"to hold a mirror up to our past and to ourselves, perhaps to our future, and to the human condition in the last half of the twentieth century"—is arguably overblown. None

of this means, however, that Kolko's book, too, can be disregarded by students of the war. On the contrary, for all its irritating characteristics and lack of balance, it contains matter which is important for our understanding of that conflict and its wider significance.

In part, the value of the work lies in the extent and nature of the material which has been brought together in its pages. More importantly, however, it arises from Kolko's correct insistence that "war is not simply a conflict between armies; more and more it is a struggle between competing social systems, incorporating the political, economic, and cultural institutions of all rivals". This is a perspective which is not the property of Marxists alone. In Kolko's case, it leads him to focus on the question of "how Vietnamese society changes, and how the Communists, the Republic of Vietnam, and Americans understood these trends and dealt with them"; more particularly, he is concerned throughout with the issues and implications surrounding the land itself, its ownership, and the Vietnamese peasantry, issues which created considerable problems for the Communist Party, but which above all were central to the failure of the United States.

As Kolko points out, it was not simply that American politicians, generals and civilian experts were for the most part unaware of the significance of what one of them later termed "land-based grievances". The dilemma in which Washington found itself had a wider basis still, arising as it did from the fact that "the Republic of Vietnam was not capable of creating an alternative to the National Liberation Front, its leadership [being] just a reflection of the crisis of Vietnamese society in this century and of the absence of a stable foundation for an indigenous ruling class". Moreover, and again as Kolko summarizes the situation that developed in the 1960s, "the very social,

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# Camaraderie of the marooned

Robert Brain

CHRISTOPHER HOPE.  
The Hottentot Room  
218pp. Heinemann. £9.95.  
0434 346632

Through discarded polystyrene, hamburger boxes and paper napkins, the Hottentots of Christopher Hope's new novel walk past the travel agencies, late-night grocers and fast-food bars of Earls Court and enter a dilapidated house with a pointed sign over its front door showing a seventeenth-century Hottentot woman with the faded steatopygous buttocks. Inside, under the benign green eyes of Frau Katie, keeper of The Hottentot Room, a group of expatriate southern Africans pass the time of night. It is a home away from home, the bar beflagged and fringed with banknotes from defunct countries such as Tanganyika, Rhodesia, Nyasaland, with bangles, beaded souvenirs, painted ostrich eggs, bush pinions, bags of magic bones. And scattered among these are relics of Frau Katie's own past: German coins, Lederhosen, Tyroler hats, medals of the Kaiser, prints of the Iron Chancellor. Because Frau Katie, emigrant of African exiles, is an exile herself, a German Jew (in a Jewish German as she steadfastly calls herself), hunted from Berlin in the early days of the Second World War.

Here, the Hottentots, fetched up among the master race, find comfort. They also find the delicacies so sorely missed, such as milk tart and plum pudding, fly cemetery and *koekstijters*, sticks of salted meat and cans of local beer. Like all expatriates, the Hottentots are held together by an intense interest in each other, by social and political gossip, sexual rivalry and offers of mutual help; and by the camaraderie between whites and blacks, Coloured and Asian, men and women, Muslims, Christians, Jews and atheists who drink together. This is the kind of loyalty which afflicts exiles everywhere, reminding one of colonial clubs where an assortment of people—a mix which would be unthinkable Back Home—sit with their Guinnesses and tinned sausages in front of a picture of a snow-covered Scottish glen.

Washed up and marooned on this horrible northern island, the Hottentots are determined not to grow old and cold. Their thoughts, even their gestures, are those of southern Africa. Consumed with despair, they wait with the colossal hope of a revolution which is receding majestically like a great ship. They dream of going home (like Corée the Hottentot brought to England in the seventeenth century for display purposes, whose first English words, much repeated, were "Corée home go"), unconsciously wiping sweat from their brows, smacking at imaginary mosquitoes, feeling blindly for the sun and listening for the surf.

The Hottentots move under their queen's direction, Frau Katie insisting on only two rules: one, that she is the person to choose or blackball a member, and two, that none of her Hottentots should ever—under threat of expulsion—form couples. Hottentots are libidinous, not monogamous, and are happy to be under Frau Katie's whimsical care, having lost most of their earlier African impetus. They are all heroes who have been diminished in some way: Mona May, the little athlete who almost jumped two metres high, longs to be back on the farm with Hendrick, her springbok; the over-dressed and over-jewelled Morris Morrison, successful ad-man, prays for the lost world of the mission station where he worked as a priest; Buffy Leslie, once deeply in love with Nietzsche and the "Most famous Marxist in the southern hemisphere", has become a militant nutritionist and runs around slapping infants on suspect food, smashing eggs and organizing gangs to laugh at fat men; Caleb Looper, the university radical, has become a hack reporter and government agent; the scholar, Biddy Hoggan, has given up Sir Philip Sidney for the office and the bed of Wyngate Hossell, who in turn has given up fiery revolt for the politics of waiting; Elize, tweeded and cherooted, has renounced nursing and now cares for Frau Katie, dying upstairs of a mysterious illness called Debussy's disease; Mr. Grovender, an Asian with an endless supply of

post-nubile daughters, plans Nuremberg trials for the South African régime; and the wild youths of the townships, the Soweto Knights, reduced to frustrated fury in Balham bedsits, put on knitted hats and leopardskins and play drums for tourists.

Outside The Hottentot Room the members are just about aware that the natives are at large, but mostly invisible like natives everywhere. The English are laughed at, maliciously attacked; they are a clothed race, a depressed race inhabiting a dirty, run-down country, wearing car coats, waiting to go for a long drive on cold days and have a cup of tea in a layby. They are a people putting up with an over-long peace, waiting for the day when they can all get back into uniform, a people slowly being driven mad by petty economics. The English are devoted to Mammon, with a mystical reverence for profit similar to that felt by the medieval peasant for God. England for the Hottentots is a greyish, penny-pinching island of sni-heads, and their only fear is that some of them might go native, have pink babies and spend the rest of their lives talking about the westerly mortgages, the Royal Family and the rate of sterling against the holiday currencies. The Hottentots allow no English members in

their club, and Hope allows no English characters in his novel—except for the fool who walks on and says "Absolutely right" and "Oh quite" a few times and then walks out, and a couple of weird tour operators found on an aeroplane.

The Hottentots are certainly in crisis, and not only identity-wise: Caleb Looper most of all. Looper is the son of a deranged inspector of mines living in a South Africa where Africans do not exist, who is nevertheless organizing a secret *putsch* to save his country. Caleb hates his father, but is forced to protect him when the government finds polluted sap in their family tree and uses the information that the Loopers are descendants of the Strandloopers (Beach-walkers)—an old Afrikaans name for the Hottentots—to blackmail the son and send him to London and the Hottentot Room to spy on his fellow countrymen. Frau Katie loves Looper, however, recognizing him as a victim of a country which, like her own, kills people for their beliefs, imprisons them for their poetry and trains racial inspectors to sniff out the blood of suspects. Frau Katie has always planned to elope with Looper, but her illness prevents it and in the end only her ashes accompany him out of the country, to East Berlin, where he dies beside them. Back in Earls Court, The

Hottentot Room has been rapidly transformed by Katie's native-loving daughter into the Colonial Bar. The old relics are torn down and the bar prettily decorated as a krasl, with the drummer poets from Soweto dressed up as Africans and singing selections from King Kong and *Ipi Tombi*. The old inhabitants go on drinking, objects of interest to the natives, who eat ethnic food with their fingers and drink cocktails with names like White Man's Grave. Frau Katie stirs in her grave as the singles bar goes blatantly double: Mr. Grovender and his present daughter Anagupta stare into each other's eyes and touch each other's earlobes; and Mona May snuggles up to Elize, who tells her tales of the veil.

*The Hottentot Room* is an entertaining novel, elegantly written and intricately plotted. It is also more than that, since the entertainment seduces us into coming to grips with dirty politics and ruthless power games. For a reader of the book for the first time, the surprise beginnings, contrivances and contraptions seem tiresomely unnecessary. They are not, of course, since in the end they add up to a balanced structure aimed squarely at its target, the complete nature of which, however, is one no non-Hottentot may ever fully grasp.

whatever he writes, in the faith that it will be edified by his distinctive experience. *End Papers* is touted as completing "the publication of Breitenbach's prison writings", which is altogether misleading unless one accepts that everything an ex-convict writes constitutes "prison writings".

For all his having sought, and discovered, a verbal equivalent for pain, for all his intelligent alertness to the twists and turns of morality in an immoral State, Breitenbach is frequently an untidy writer, addicted to diversions, unable to resist puerile jokes and puns. "It is bad manners to talk with your mouth full of words", he remarks, and one is often tempted to use his witicism against him. All three books of "prison writings" would have benefited from firmer editing. The original draft of *The True Confessions* was typed up from tape-recordings ("talk talk talk") and although it was conscientiously worked over later, the finished product retains a good deal of the speaker's natural loquaciousness.

The tale of Breitenbach's arrest and imprisonment is told in the form of a confession to "Mr. Investigator", the cruel incarceration, with whom the prisoner forms a perverse intimacy, and in the face of whom he experiences not only terror and hatred but respect and even a horrified liking. Mr. Investigator, after all, knows more about the wretch behind this account than anyone else does. Mr. Investigator specializes in destroying personality, and Breitenbach is quick to admit to him that he has succeeded in destroying his. Some pictures of him taken during his interrogation later appeared in the press:

And then, maybe they weren't of me. Those were the pictures taken of the bulk that they were excavating at that point, or of that man who was alive in that web at that time.

What *The True Confessions* does so brilliantly is to relate how a character disappears under multiple layers of exile in prison: exiled from society at large, from his family, from his former life in Paris where he was already an exile, axiled in solitary confinement from his fellow inmates, and even exiled, like a pariah, from the Afrikaners, his own people; who are holding him. In addition, though, the tale provides a chart, as it were, of the process of reconstruction. In this, the act of writing itself is paramount. "It is by walking that you learn to walk," *The True Confessions* is the story of the search for the identity of its own narrator.

After much bargaining, with the help of pleas lodged by the Afrikaner literary establishment, Breitenbach was finally allowed to write in prison (his other request, that he be permitted to paint, was refused), on condition that he hand in the fruits of his labours at the end of each day and keep no notes. In return, the "Greys" promised that his pages would be given back on release, and the promise was kept.

This placed the writer in a bizarre situation, where he

having to practise his essentially private activity "knowing that the enemy is reading over your shoulder . . . knowing also that you are laying bare the most intimate and the most personal nerves and pulsebeats in yourself to the barbarians". The result of this endeavour was *Mouir*, a collection of stories written in prose deliberately refracted in order to elude the philistine scrutiny of Mr. Investigator and his cohorts (who, incidentally, included Breitenbach's brothers).

Every prisoner, in whatever society—even those who have to cope only with letter censors—learns the art of literary evasion, some becoming expert in making themselves understood only by those they wish to understand them. The thought of a novel whose form and content are determined by such constraints is an intriguing one, but perhaps Breitenbach has succeeded too well in being elusive. While parts of the intensely lyrical *Mouir* are pleasing when read sentence by sentence, a collection of these sentences yields little. In *The True Confessions* he describes writing in the dark, suggesting that this "wording" is perhaps akin to the experiments that the surrealists used to make in earlier years, and Breitenbach's kaleidoscopic prose does have a similarly random feel about it. Obsessed on the one hand by the necessity to confess, and on the other, by the omniscience of his totalitarian captors (experts in "washing brains"), Breitenbach has produced in *Mouir* a poetic muddle.

One backs away from these "mirrors" relieved, at first, to find the solid, recognizable prose of *End Papers*. The earliest of its thirty-eight items dates from 1967; the latest from June of this year. That Breitenbach treats them most earnestly is attested by the fact that they are furnished with forty pages of "End Notes". But for the most part they are remarkably ordinary: "Dear David", for example, solemnly dated like all the others, is a letter to a passing acquaintance in New York; it includes its own false starts, plus simple observations on Parisian life and American women, with the announcement that the author is a happy male chauvinist ("Never rape a lady against her wishes" is one of his earlier jokes).

There are intelligent responses to South Africa's unique "conscious" banalization of humanity, to the call for a cultural boycott, and to the axiom that "time . . . is Black", but the most striking impression *End Papers* gives is that Breitenbach now supposes the world is keen to hang on his every word. What he has any on the nature of the South African State, on apartheid, on repression, on the role of the writer forced by one or more of these, he said to much greater effect in the context of the political freedom on him by the subject matter of *The True Confessions*. At his best, he is an explorer of both self and form (and frequently claims that they are inseparable); at worst, he is unable to recognize a jolting when he makes one.

But then, the novel goes deeper than that

# Chekhov's carrot and other questions

Anne Duchêne

JULIAN BARNES.  
Starting at the Sun  
195pp. Cape. £9.95.  
0224024140

This new book, Julian Barnes's fourth, is slightly more of a novel than was *Flaubert's Parrot*, in that its central female figure, Jean, ages from about nine—she is seventeen in 1939—to ninety-nine in 2021; but essentially it is a free-ranging flight over all the kinds of questions we ask ourselves continually, such as "Why is the mind excessively tenacious of life?" (if that is imprinted in childhood, as with Jean), to some of the last things: life and death, suicide, God, and how to deal bravely with them all—about which we have to find our own answers.

It also, concluding as it does in the 2020s, takes in some bruisingly funny moments at the expense of our attitudes to question and answer at the present dawn of the Information Age, when we are being encouraged to consult the computers as earnestly as our ancestors consulted entrails. Thus, for instance, GPC, the General Purposes Computer, begun in

1998, and opened in 2003, which stores "everything contained in all books published in all languages", is "not only democratic in input, it was also democratic in output. You keyed in with your social security number, and output was measured to your level of understanding." The more oracular TAT—The Absolute Truth—is newer, and not yet so freely accessible; using it involves a medical certificate and written permission from living relatives.

Images of flight abound here, beginning with a prelude in which Sgt-Pilot Prosser, in his wartime night-flying Hurricane, drops his altitude by 10,000 feet, and therefore sees the sun rise twice: "an ordinary miracle which he would never forget". Prosser, later billeted with Jean's family, explains to her that he is "twice burnt", or "windy", and will not survive his return to flying duties; thus impinging on a great many of the book's preoccupations with courage in relation to living and dying, and with the question of suicide. (Also he flies by night in a red and black universe, as white and green lights would spoil night vision; much later Jean wonders if faith might be like that: "either they'd fitted the right instrument panel or they hadn't. It was a design feature, a capacity; nothing to do with knowledge or intelligence or perceptiveness").

Part Two, however, its epigraph a graffito circa 1984—"Three wise men—were you serious?"—brings Jean into contact with very much more, including contemporary issues such as feminism and tourism. She has, first, twenty barren years of marriage ("when she thought of Michael and sex she imagined an over-filling water-tank which occasionally had to be drained; it didn't have to be done too often, it wasn't exactly a nuisance, it was just part of running the house"). Then she conceives, and leaves her husband, to make a better life for herself and her son, Gregory. Gregory grows older very understandingly too ("In the old days there had been tribes wandering around who believed they were the only tribe on earth, and whose belief was not shaken by the appearance of other tribes. People who were called successes reminded Gregory of these tribes"), and Jean takes off even further,

would suggest. Remembering the Nazi past, the book confidently asserts that people will be caught up by history in the same way in the future: there will be other monsters, other victims, other passengers. Meanwhile the day-to-day struggle between good and evil goes on. In *Dr Gruber's Daughter* the latter seems to produce the more striking representatives, even though religious figures are there in the background. These are not immune from the writer's mockery, as when the convent hires a television set to watch the Coronation and it is revealed that Mother Martin's preference is for *I Love Lucy*. Yet, just as the book's comedy is not a denial of its seriousness, such humour does not prevent the good being represented by the forces of faith. Janice Elliott's finest stroke comes in the last paragraph, when she unexpectedly evokes a distant echo of another serious comedy, T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*.

## Crime file

T. J. Binyon

SIMON BRETT.  
Dead Giveaway  
176pp. Gollancz. £7.95.  
0 575 03719 9

Out-of-work actor Charles Paris hits the bottom, showbiz-wise, when he is invited to take part in the pilot for a television give-away panel game, *If the Cap Fits*, which involves much unfunny playing about with bats. At the climactic moment the presenter, one of the most hated men on television, takes a swig from his glass, turns blue, and expires; Charles is persuaded to investigate the murder. Plot thinish, but Paris is always good value, and the description of television life pleasingly vicious.

Yet the book's themes are serious ones. Mother Martin in the local convent remarks to herself that there is no certainty of ease within or without these walls. The experience of life portrayed in the book reflects that, on all levels, including its mismatched relationships. Elliott grasps the nettle early on, inserting in a fantasy of Babakov's a reference to the ovens of Auschwitz. Even the farce turns black; only the youngsters, Janusz and his English girlfriend Posy, are innocent enough—not being romantically self-absorbed—to be largely oblivious to the conflict between good and evil. Less than ten years on, war guilt is still an issue, and so too are the crimes which might be committed by victims to protect themselves.

When it is revealed, the secret of 161-Radpole Road proves almost too clever—it threatens to turn the book into a certain kind of thriller. Yet the novel goes deeper than that

Prosser, in fact, provides much of the recurrent imagery throughout the book, which finally becomes a kind of web thrown over the whole story. The author flies us through it at many different levels: sometimes low enough to overhear human voices, on the golf course, in a kitchen; sometimes looping exuberant loops of play and irony, or banking and rolling into mordantly funny authorial digressions (on life-insurance, say, or air-travel); sometimes holding a steady course towards the stars, the sun, and space, where we know we are all lost.

The book is divided into three (unnamed) parts. In the first, Jean, a rather pallid child, caddying for her distinctly unreliable Uncle Leslie, matures into marriage at eighteen (celebrated by some painfully funny encounters with a Dutch cap), and considers herself "settled". Her intelligence is always undemanding, peculiarly colourless, tentative and fluid—and like water, it rescues into everything. The epigraph for this part, however, is from Chekhov's letters, when he is asked about the meaning of life: "It is like asking what a carrot is. A carrot is a carrot, and nothing more is known."

Part Two, however, its epigraph a graffito circa 1984—"Three wise men—were you serious?"—brings Jean into contact with very much more, including contemporary issues such as feminism and tourism. She has, first, twenty barren years of marriage ("when she thought of Michael and sex she imagined an over-filling water-tank which occasionally had to be drained; it didn't have to be done too often, it wasn't exactly a nuisance, it was just part of running the house"). Then she conceives, and leaves her husband, to make a better life for herself and her son, Gregory. Gregory grows older very understandingly too ("In the old days there had been tribes wandering around who believed they were the only tribe on earth, and whose belief was not shaken by the appearance of other tribes. People who were called successes reminded Gregory of these tribes"), and Jean takes off even further,

into travel. She visits Chinn, as the author, plainly, has done too. (The ceremonious Chinese greeting, on unexpectedly meeting a friend, he says, is "The sun has risen twice today"). She also, after making a list of the seven natural wonders of life—what might be called its "ordinary miracles", available to almost all of us—visits a slightly emended list of the seven wonders of the world: the Pyramids instead of the catacombs, and—as Uncle Leslie had told her the Turks ate hedgehogs—the Grand Canyon instead of St Sophia. The Grand Canyon prompts several characteristic authorial thoughts: for instance, that we say "against nature" when we mean "against reason" ("It was nature which provided the miracles, the hallucinations, the beautiful trickery"), and that the other wonders were all man-made, but "Nature had thrown up the seventh, and it was the seventh which had thrown up the questions".

She is also attracted into bed by Gregory's girl-friend, though this is not consummated, and it is said to have to say that Rachel, with her "swivelling brown eyes" and "fierce brown glare", strikes a rather strident note among the rest of the small, mild choir of characters, and even encourages some gawker caresses than is common in this writer.

In Part Three ("Immortality is no learned question"—Kierkegaard), in 2021, Jean is ninety-nine, "an alert, tidy, sympathetic old lady who, if she hadn't necessarily attained wisdom, had at least discarded all stupidity". Gregory now moves centre-stage, to ask the computers about the things which continue to vex them both, from the nink, in Jean's case, to all the ones about God and death. In the end, they charter a plane to see the sun setting—once only—in the west.

This small, packed book is impossible, in short, to "summarize"; markers, merely, can be placed, to suggest its teasing fullness, its wit, incisiveness, gentleness and generosity. Julian Barnes is forty now; a cheering aspect of the twenty-first century.

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# 'Strangers from Within' into 'Lord of the Flies'

On William Golding's 75th birthday, Charles Monteith recalls how he came to publish 'Lord of the Flies'

The typescript was unenticing. Bound between two pieces of cardboard, the sheets had a dog-eared, shop-soiled, down-at-heel look. The edges of the first dozen or so were yellowish, evidence that they, and they alone, had been read a number of times; the remainder were whiter but not pristine. Though I had been a publisher for less than a month, I could already spot a manuscript that had been the rounds and this was an obvious example. A short submission letter, written from Salisbury, was attached: "I send you the typescript of my novel *Strangers from Within* which might be defined as an allegorical interpretation of a stock situation. I hope you will feel able to publish it." It was signed "William Golding".

A Tuesday afternoon in late September 1953. As usually happened on Tuesday afternoons, three or four editors were weeding out the week's haul of manuscripts in preparation for Wednesday's weekly editorial committee, appropriately, if somewhat quaintly, called the Book Committee, at which decisions were made. *Strangers from Within* was in the pile pushed in my direction. Our professional reader - she read for a number of other publishers as well as Faber and also for a leading literary agency - had already given it one of her "quick looks" and her verdict was in green ink at the top of the author's letter: "Time: The Future. Absurd and uninteresting fantasy about the explosion of an atomic bomb on the colonics and a group of children who land in jungle country near New Guinea. Rubbish and dull. Pointless." This was followed by a capital R enclosed in a circle, the symbol for "reject".

I opened it expecting nothing and after the first dozen or so pages was inclined, like so many readers before me, to abandon it at that point. They described a nuclear war. Remembering them now, more than thirty years later, my impression is that they were powerful, if occasionally overwritten, and that they contained, initially, no characters at all. Later the focus shifted earthwards and to a hurriedly organized evacuation of schoolchildren destined, presumably, for the Antipodes. The planes in which they flew had detachable cabins, "passenger tubes", which could be released by the pilot in order to float to earth beneath giant parachutes. The focus altered once again to one particular plane, to a fierce air battle over the Pacific, to the release of the "passenger tube", to the island and, at last, to some human beings. They were all boys.

As I read on I found that, reluctantly, I was becoming not merely interested but totally gripped. The island was vividly, brilliantly real and the boys were real boys: despite his half promise, Ralph's betrayal of the secret of Piggy's nickname; the appalling sycophantic laughter of the crowd; Jack's authority over his choir. A fat, spectacled boy at school myself, I squirmed for Piggy. I said that I would take the manuscript home to read properly and when I had finished it I found it unforgettable. Indeed, to anticipate a little, as I read and reread it over the next month or two, thought about it, discussed it with colleagues and with the author, it came to dominate my imagination completely. I found that, increasingly, I kept talking about it until friends began to hint that I was becoming a Golding bore.

But I realized that the novel had flaws which seriously weakened it and might, for some readers, make it a partial or total failure. Some were superficial - commas which strided the pages as thickly as currants in a fruit loaf, Piggy's "common" speech - his "ass-mar", "ham fruit" - laid on with too heavy a hand; but these could easily be put right. Two others were more serious.

The first was structural. In addition to the long description of atomic war at the beginning, there were two further occasions on which the scene shifted from the island to what was happening in the world outside: an "interlude" occurring about half-way through and describing an air battle many miles above the island which culminated in the body of the dead airman, the "Beast from Air", drifting down by parachute; and, at the very end, an

outline of the lethal manoeuvres in which the "trim cruiser", the whole fleet of which it formed part and the enemy fleet opposing it, were engaged - rather too clearly placed there, I thought, to show that what had happened on the island was a fable, reflecting in miniature what was happening in the adult world. These passages needed severe pruning.

The second flaw, more fundamental and much more difficult, was Simon. Simon was Christ; or, too obviously, a Christ figure. At times he would retire to a secret place in the jungle hidden behind a mat of creepers, where a Voice spoke to him from the green candle-buds as they opened in the scented dusk to reveal their white flowers; a vision assured him with prophetic certainty, and he assured Ralph, at a moment of appalling doubt, that Ralph would get home safely; when the boys' fragile society began to fall apart and Jack and his blood-smeared hunters began their murderous dances, Simon led the boys, or some of them, on Good Dances on the beach. Alone and terrified he confronted and was not vanquished by the Lord of the Flies - a literal translation of Beelzebub, as Golding later told me. Simon alone, despite his weakness, the threat of epilepsy, taunts that he was "batty", seemed untroubled by an otherwise universal stain. In the end he was murdered.

To put it crudely and insensitively, Simon was not to me, and would not be, I suspected, to most readers, wholly credible. I do not, in fact, think that I fully understood the problem at the time and it is only in the light of Golding's other novels and later discussions with him that I see it more clearly now. Simon is not only a boy, a fully and totally human boy; he is one of those rare people who are in fact - it is impossible to avoid these imprecise and difficult words - "numinous" or "charismatic". Nathaniel in *Pincher Martin* and, most clearly of all, Matty in *Darkness Visible* are later variations on the same mysterious theme. But Simon, as he first appeared, was not entirely successful. For the reader - or at any rate for me - the suspension of disbelief was a very unwilling one and the only idea I had was that any purely miraculous events in the narrative must be made ambivalent, eliminated or "toned down" in such a way as to make him explicable in purely rational terms. At the same time his importance, indeed his centrality, must be preserved.

At the next Book Committee I reported that the novel was odd, imperfect but potentially

**The final hurdle was the Sales Director . . . a real professional . . . The book, he said, was unpublishable.**

very powerful and that I would like to discuss it with the author. There was general doubt, not unnaturally in view of the description I had given of it and the reservations I had expressed; and it was decided that it should have several more readings before any contact was made. Two editorial colleagues agreed with my verdict; Geoffrey Faber took it and was also prepared, though with doubts, to support me. The final hurdle was the Sales Director, who, like our reader, was regarded as a real professional who could tell by instinct whether or not a book would sell. He kept it for a week or two but eventually brought it to a Book Committee meeting where we all waited for his verdict, which he gave - he was a kind-hearted man - with a ruefully apologetic glance at me. The book, he said, was unpublishable. This led to a heated discussion at the end of which it was decided - this was chiefly due to Geoffrey, who was unwilling to dampen too abruptly a young editor's enthusiasm - that I could meet the author and discuss the changes I thought would improve the book, but that I must make it clear that the firm was in no way committed to publishing it.

Golding and I first met in early December. I was nervous and so, I suspect, was he: he was the first of "my" authors. In advance I had speculated a good deal about him and had decided that he was almost certainly a young, or youngish, clergyman; for the more I thought about the novel, the more its theological substructure became apparent. Brought up a Presbyterian as I had been, with parts of the Shorter Catechism immovably embedded in

my mind, I could recognize Original Sin when I saw it: "the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness and the corruption of man's whole nature, together with all the actual transgressions which proceed from it".

So the neatly trimmed beard - clerical beards were not so common then as they are now - the grey flannel trousers and tweed jacket surprised me; but when Golding told me he was a schoolmaster I realized that I had been stupid. Only a schoolmaster would know so intimately, and with such precision of detail, how awful boys could be. We talked at length and at the end I felt that a cautious trust and even liking had established themselves between us. I made my suggestions, rather nervously, and Golding, to my relief, promised to take the typescript back with him and, in the light of a rereading, consider them.

About ten days later he sent me

some bits of the emended version of my novel - the beginning, the middle and the end. I've done away with the separate bits, Prologue, Interlude, Epilogue, and as you'll see, merged them into the body of the text. Furthermore, Chapter One now begins with the meeting of Piggy and Ralph and I'm slowing the story of how they got there - or all that is necessary of it - to come out in conversation. Simon is the next job, and a more difficult one. I suppose you agree that I must convey a theophany of some sort or else he won't be as big a figure as he ought. I'm going to cut down the elaborate description of it, though, and try to get the same effect by silence. Then I'm eliminating odd bits and pieces of "Simon" throughout the text, to build him up . . . I'm making Piggy's speech ungrammatical but not misspelling it . . . Rereading the novel as a stranger (oh, I'm bound to agree with almost all your criticism and am full of enthusiasm and energy for the cleaning up process. In fact I'm right back on the island.

The changes were even better than I had hoped for. All that I had suggested was a drastic shortening of the "nuclear war" passages, but Golding's solution was more radical and totally successful. They had disappeared completely and the novel's new opening could not have been bettered. In my reply I congratulated him and suggested a few other, fairly superficial changes which he accepted a few days later in a letter with which he enclosed the redrafted "Simon" passages. It is clear from my reply - which rereads, I fear, rather pompously - that I was still not completely satisfied.

Here are the "Simon" bits back again, with my tentative emendations pencilled in. I think you have hit on the right approach to this most tricky of all the problems in the novel; and my emendations are again simply "toning down" of emphasis. I think the danger to be guarded against now is turning Simon into a prig, a self-righteous infant who insists on saying his prayers in the dorm while the naughty boys throw pillows at him. In the early stages I feel it is enough simply to indicate that he is in some way odd, different, withdrawn; and therefore capable of the lonely, reified course of facing the pig's head and climbing the mountain top. The allegory, the theophany, is the imaginative foundation and like all foundations is there to be concealed and built on.

Before long, Golding returned the typescript in what was to be, by and large, its final form. He had been ill, running a very high temperature which was partly due to tonsillitis and partly to "the effort of patching - so much more wearing than bashing straight ahead at a story". With this version I was, by and large, satisfied, though I thought a few small changes might be made with advantage; and when I reported all this to the Book Committee it was decided, at long last, to accept the book for publication. I suggested we offer Golding what was then our usual advance for a first novel, £50, but in view of the author's patience Geoffrey Faber made it £60. And so it was settled.

The next problem was the title. In our earliest exchange of letters I had said that *Strangers from Within* didn't seem to me right - both too abstract and too explicit - and Golding did not dissent. Indeed, he began at once to suggest alternatives, "A Cry of Children", "Nightmare Island", "To Find an Island". Both I and my editorial colleagues offered suggestions - my own favourite hunting-ground was *The Tempest*, which is set on an island - but it was Alan Pringle, an editor rightly reputed to be good at titles, who eventually thought of *Lord of the Flies*. It has since turned out to be probably the most memorable title given to any book since the end of the Second World War. Chapter titles were the next prob-

lem. Our Production and Design department was adamant that a decent-looking novel must have chapter titles to be used as running heads; and Golding, though he said his instinct was slightly against them, accepted without further protest a list of suggestions I sent him.

The book went into "page on galley" proofs, which looked like galleys but were half the length and it was only then that I carried out a final editorial operation - cutting Ralph's hair. In the desperate chase at the end, when Ralph is being bunted down by Jack and his pack, his long, unshorn locks keep falling blindingly over his eyes, symbolizing effectively, but perhaps too heavily, the descent of irrationality, instinct, panic, over reason and intelligence. Golding was as patient as ever: "By all means cut Ralph's hair for him. I had some doubts of it myself." So I simply took out every other reference to it. The Production department completed its work and Sales took over.

Before publication we made various efforts to whip up some advance publicity but with only modest success. *John O'London's Weekly*, that forgotten literary periodical, was to make it "Novel of the Month" but ceased publication a week before the accolade was to be conferred; a committee set up by the first Cheltenham Festival did not even short-list it.

**Eliot . . . was told by a friend at the Garrick that Faber had published an unpleasant novel about small boys behaving unspeakably on a desert island. In some mild alarm, he took a copy home.**

for their First Novel award - nor did it have any better luck with the Authors' Club's annual Silver Quill. The Book Society, then a very powerful body, promised a reference to it, though no more, in their monthly magazine.

On September 17, 1954, *Lord of the Flies* was at last published, by a curious coincidence exactly a year after it was first submitted. Its early reception by reviewers was usually good, and even, on occasions, enthusiastic. E. M. Forster and C. S. Lewis both praised it. Eliot, who had not read it before, was told by a friend at the Garrick that Faber had published an unpleasant novel about small boys behaving unspeakably on a desert island. In some mild alarm, he took a copy home and told me next day that he had found it not only a splendid novel but morally and theologically impeccable. The book began not only to be talked about but to sell and before very long we had in order a reprint. In the United States, where we had great difficulty in placing it, it made the impression at first, but after a year or two, a paperback edition began to spread like forest fire through university campuses, at first on the West Coast and then in the rest of the country. Personally, I was first alerted to what was happening when an article on Golding appeared in the *Hudson Review*. And finally the book began to be "set" at university level, at A Level, finally at O Level, in Great Britain and then at equivalent levels abroad. By now there are translations of it into twenty-six languages, including Russian, Thai, Japanese, Slovak, Serbo-Croat, Catalan, Icelandic and Persian; and versions in Indonesian and Malaysian are in preparation. Sales of Faber editions alone total over three million copies, but there is no record, so far as I know, of total sales throughout the world. They must be astronomical.

In December 1983 Golding invited me to accompany him and his wife to Stockholm for the Nobel ceremonies; and on the evening of the presentation there was a great ball at which the laureates and their entourages were presented to the King and Queen. Carl XVI Gustav - a spectacled, serious-looking young man - shook Golding's hand warmly. "It is a great pleasure to meet you, Mr Golding," he said. "I had to do *Lord of the Flies* at school."

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*This article forms a chapter in William Golding: The Man and his Books: A tribute on his 75th birthday, edited by John Carey, to be published by Faber and Faber Ltd on September 22 and reviewed in a later issue of the TLS.*

## Letters

### The Victoria County History

Sir, - The questions which Andor Gomme raises in his review (August 29) of *A History of Shropshire*, Volume Eleven, about the objectives and methods of the Victoria County History deserve an airing. The staff and also the academic committee which supervises the VCH indeed have them constantly in mind and discuss them from time to time. The plan of the VCH has been retained in its main outlines because to embark now on a completely new course would be to abandon the existing series unfinished and to take on a task at least twice as large as that which the VCH already faces. The early volumes are admittedly not fully adequate by modern standards, but the users of the VCH, both academics and the interested public, complain much more when there is no VCH for the place or topic which they are seeking than when the volume is an early one. Partly for that reason, it is the policy to apply the whole effort to producing new volumes rather than to revising the old ones.

The VCH, divided county by county along the historical boundaries, has for each county general sections and topographical sections. We have now reached a stage where very few of the general sections, over the country as a whole, remain to be published. The topographical sections are divided parish by parish, and each parish history is arranged by topics. Although a reader interested in one particular period or in particular phenomena might find some other arrangement more convenient, we have not found an alternative to the plan inherited from the early VCH which is more effective over the whole of the historical period and for the comprehensive coverage of all topics.

Although at first sight it may look as though the formula has hardly been touched, the content of the volumes has in fact undergone far-reaching changes during the past forty years, in response to demand from inside and outside the VCH. Some things are much the same, others have been changed, a few have been omitted, and many have been newly introduced. A comparison of *Shropshire*, Volume Eleven, with, for example, *Worcestershire*, Volume Three (1913), shows that the change is one of kind and not only of scale.

Detail which seems trifling to one reader is just what another is looking for. The treatment of architecture is a special instance: whereas the VCH used to have a large architectural staff and concerned itself only with medieval buildings, parish churches, and manor houses and mansions, describing them in detail, it now tries to indicate the historical interest of buildings of all types and all periods. Until a few years ago the publication of Inventories by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments was assumed to make the description of buildings by the VCH less necessary; the new policy of the RCHM to which Professor Gomme alludes (the rumours mentioned are entirely new to me and are unfounded) has required a reconsideration of VCH practice, but there is not much that can be done so long as there is only one architectural specialist on the staff.

All concerned with the VCH would warmly welcome faster progress. With an average of three volumes a year since 1976, it is not as slow as Gomme suggests. Although completion of the whole series looks frighteningly remote, we hope that each of the twelve counties now in progress will be finished in the foreseeable future. Given the limited resources available, new volumes are produced as quickly as possible without sacrificing the standards of a scholarly work of reference.

That background gives some perspective to Professor Gomme's criticisms of *Shropshire*, Volume Eleven. The area covered by the volume is determined mainly by parochial boundaries, which provide the most enduring framework. The industrial history of the area and the history of Lilleshall Abbey are to be found among the general sections in earlier volumes; the Iron Bridge is discussed on pages 22 and 25, though not of great length because it has been extensively treated in other publications to which the reader is directed. I am sorry that Professor Gomme found the footnotes unusable, but I think he is exceptional if "op-

cit" ever refers to a citation more than two notes back it is a rare lapse. The index is intended to be as helpful as possible, but it still seems unnecessary in a Shropshire volume to say that every place other than a great town and not otherwise identified is in that county.

Our contacts with local historians, record offices and libraries suggest that many readers enjoy the VCH and find it useful partly just because it is predictable and reliable in a routine way, offering factual information without much interpretation and providing a starting-point for further research. A scholarly work of reference, packing as much material as possible into a confined space, is seldom going to be highly readable, though our painstaking and self-effacing authors do sometimes succeed in transmitting their enthusiasm through the mass of detail which it is their main function to present.

CHRISTOPHER ELINGTON, Victoria History of the Counties of England, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, Senate House, London WC1.

Sir, - "Who now", asks Andor Gomme, (August 29), "takes [a Victoria County History volume] off the shelf with any expectation of pleasure or even of being fully and usefully informed?" Well, I do, for one, and so do many historians I know. It would take as much space as he has filled to defend the enterprise properly; let me say only that as each new bloc of parishes is covered by the VCH one is able to work on the local history of that area in a way impossible for areas not yet covered. Professor Gomme may be tired of volumes that seem "impenetrable" or "dull"; I, in turn, am tired of reviewers who accept these splendid volumes and then turn the review into a general attack on the whole enterprise. It can only give encouragement to some already ungenerous local authorities to cut back their financial support for the series still further.

D. M. PALLISER, Department of History, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull.

Sir, - I do not have the knowledge or ability to argue with Andor Gomme's carve-up of Volume Eleven of the Victoria County History of *Shropshire* (August 29). But if he wants to be so magisterial about it all he should not offer loose opinion. I can accept facts which might be detrimental to Telford - but wherever did he get the idea that Telford is "such a Cinderella among new towns"? This sort of judgment is subjective - but most people in new towns would surely regard Telford and Milton Keynes as the big two by most standards. Even those disagreeing with that could hardly put Telford anywhere near the Cinderella category. Has Andor Gomme actually seen the place lately? It is the only town in the West Midlands to have achieved a net growth in jobs in the last three years. Private investment overtook public investment through the Development Corporation in 1982 and the Enterprise Zone is running out of space so rapidly that we desperately want an extension. I could go on endlessly - but I suppose if I carry on writing after midnight my Volvo estate will turn into a bloody pumpkin.

DAVID EVERINGTON, Telford Development Corporation, Priorslee Hall, Telford, Shropshire.

### Aspects of Copyright

Sir, - My attention has been drawn to Donald Greene's letter of August 22 in which he asserts that Michael Reed's recent book, *The Age of Exuberance*, duplicates in title and apparent content an earlier work of his own.

As the publishers of Reed's book, we would point out that it is intended for the intelligent general reader who seeks information about the social history of the period 1550-1600. Mr Greene's book was published in the United States as long ago as 1970, and is a textbook aimed at American students studying on a modular course; to the best of our knowledge there has been no British edition. It seems unlikely, therefore, that there should be any confusion with Reed's book.

NORMAN FRANKLIN, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4.

### Terrorism

Sir, - Charles Townshend's reference in his stimulating review of recent books on international terrorism (August 29) to "the notorious tag 'nuc man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter'" puts one in mind of Richard Crossman's reminiscences of his war-time experiences (*New Statesman*, December 15, 1956):

I remember the awkward moment when the Government dropped Draz Mihalovitch and backed Tito. In future, our directive ran, Mihalovitch forces will be described not as "patriots" but as "terrorist gangs"; we shall also drop the phrase "red handits" as applied to partisans and substitute "freedom fighters" . . . Only later did it dawn on me that British Cabinet Ministers, Archbishops and newspaper editors actually believed our propaganda and took this moral double-talk seriously.

Plus ça change . . . And not merely in Britain, as Charles Townshend's review so effectively implies.

KYRIE FITZLYON, 2 Adlington Cottages, Sutton Lane, London W4.

### Library Ban

Sir, - Since June of this year the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham has withdrawn News International publications, including the *TLS*, from its libraries. The reason is unstated, though I shall not be so arch as to pretend I cannot guess it. Here is a case of naked political censorship.

As a writer, I take particular exception to this, and have informed the Council that I shall only pay my rates when these publications have been restored.

From the Council's offices flies the red flag. I make no objection to this. Perhaps it may even serve as a warning.

NIGEL FOXELL, 50 Parfrey Street, London W6.

### Charlie Chaplin

Sir, - May I comment on Harry M. Geduld's dissatisfaction with my review of his edition of *Charlie Chaplin's Own Story* (Letters, August 22)?

I had indeed taken full note of the reservations he quotes; and in fact these seem in no way to affect his confidence in Chaplin's substantial authorship of the book: "if . . . we view them as pure fiction, they are no less significant, for like Chaplin's films we must regard them as the fantasies of a great artist" (my italics). The cover and title page announce without qualification, "Charlie Chaplin's Own Story, Edited and with an Introduction . . .". "In essence", Professor Geduld confidently assures his readers in the introduction, "CCOS [Charlie Chaplin's Own Story] depicts Chaplin as he wished his public to see him in 1916."

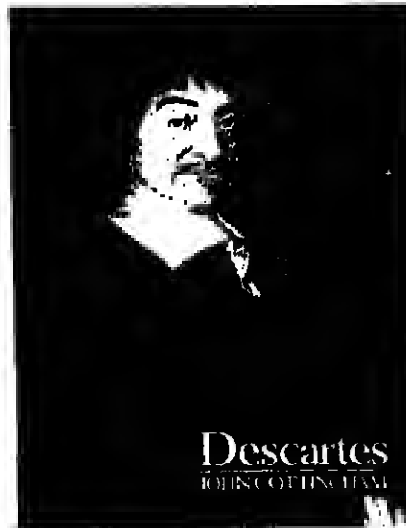
This, though, is hardly consistent with the time, trouble and money Chaplin expended on getting the book suppressed, or with his statement in 1916, through lawyers, that "it is purely a work of fiction, holding him to public ridicule and contempt".

Geduld's assertion that "Chaplin was a peculiarly unreliable biographer" is mainly argued on the grounds of the enormous discrepancies between this spurious 1916 book and Chaplin's authentic *Autobiography* of 1964. In justification he declares that "these two autobiographies are equally fascinating, equally dubious, and strikingly different". Thereupon his sidekicks further dispute on authorship: "Having stated these differences, any attempt to verify or discredit one or other of these autobiographies is bound to be a largely futile endeavour."

Why? Six years' research in primary sources, including the private Chaplin archives at Vevey and the records of the then Greater London Council, have left me with a much heightened regard for Chaplin's honesty as autobiographer and for his phenomenal memory. On the other hand, the legal correspondence about the suppression of *Charlie Chaplin's Own Story* survives in full to confirm that the book was an imaginative creation by Mrs Laet, apart from the incorporation into her 258 pages of a newspaper interview undertaken almost a year earlier. Mrs Laet cannot

continued overleaf

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## Basil Blackwell

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## COMMENTARY

## Above suspicion

E. S. Turner

BENTRAVERS  
Reakery Neck  
Shaftesbury Theatre

In 1915 the young Ben Travers went aloft in the nose of a Sopwith biplane, armed with a rifle, to engage a Zeppelin, which was half-way home at the time. In *Roekery Nook* he directs his fire on a Teutonic gas-bag called Putz, who turns his pretty stepdaughter adrift for eating forbidden whortleberries in bed. The arrival of this dewy-eyed onerist, in dew-soaked pyjamas, at the house of a newly-wed male and his unmarried cousin provokes panic and delirious subterfuge.

Let no one ask why a Somerset village, so soon after the Kaiser's war, should be tyrannized by a whip-wielding Junker, who turns up jack-boated in other people's houses, wearing his one medallion and a *pickelhaube* helmet.

Though the community lums with spiteful gossip (His step-daughter? Ha!) this world is yet an innocent one. Men's legs and breeches are veiled in voluminous bugs. Women are thought to wear botches, though no one really knows. Girls in strange houses take off their frocks and lend them to girls they have never met, without asking too many questions. It is also a world in which young women can vanish for a few hours without the Yard being alerted. *Roekery Nook* – the title alone is a reproach to the perversely unmemorable play titles of today – was first produced just after the General Strike of 1926. Its author said it had received more performances than all his other plays put together. It has been modernized; it has been turned into a musical; it was Britain's second "talkie". Mark Kingston's production, marking the author's centenary, is firmly in period.

Travers wrote the play to order, under the sharp eyes of the Aldwych team of Tom Walls and Ralph Lynn, who, like boys squabbling over sweets, demanded that laughs be apportioned on a strict fifty-fifty basis. The hard-pressed playwright handed out no epigrams and only occasionally an American-style wisecrack ("If his brain were made of doughnuts he would have nothing for the hole in the

middle"). Jokes sprang spontaneously from the desperate business in hand. There were catch-phrases like "O misery me!", as voiced by the put-upon Robertson Hare, who did wonders for "Indubitably!"

Those with long memories may find the two main characters disconcerting. Monocled Ralph Lynn was described by J. C. Trewin as "like a Tenniel drawing of the Mad Hatter"; monocled Tom Courtenay, a shade older for a newly-wed, eschews the more vacuous silly ass stuff and develops his own line of quiet desperation, leaving other members of the cast to go over the top. In the part once played by Walls, who was a bit of a raffish bully, Ian Ogilvy is rather the twinkling tennis club character. But in their own style and on an unfrenzied level they have some hilarious moments together. Farce demands that people found doing something shall pretend to be doing something else; so, when the two are surprised shouting "You!" at each other they effortlessly convert the tiff into a finger-wagging version of "Ukulele Lady".

As the hen-pecked husband, Derek Smith is demonically possessed, bolting under and over furniture as if seeking a secret outlet from a pantomime kitchen. He stiffens in a trance and is carried off like a tailor's dummy by the girl fugitive (appliance for Georgia Allen). His strangled croak on hearing of the approach of his wife (Nicola McAuliffe) is like the sound of a dinner fork being chewed up in a waste disposal unit. Peggy Mount's massive housekeeper ("Would you like to see my quarters?") is a neat study in low-minded menace and laborious ambulation. The bald-headed Putz of Lionel Jeffries recalls Stroheim and Alf Garnett alike.

The director's taste for "business" demands that a portly admiral (another blimp caught in the playwright's sights) shall be greeted by that knee-bending exercise once *de rigueur* for stage policemen, though one can live a lifetime without seeing it performed on ship or shore. Alas, an educated joke about a lady being above suspicion, like Potiphar's wife, was mangled and fell unnoticed.

The text of *Woman In Mind* by Alan Ayckbourn (96pp Faber, £3.95, 0 571 14570 5) will be published on September 22.

## In extremis

Carol Rumens

ALAN AYCKBOURN  
Woman In Mind  
Vaudeville Theatre

If Alan Ayckbourn had been a woman playwright, he would no doubt by now have been the darling of the radical feminists, hailed as a chronicler of the woes of heterosexual womanhood. That this side of his imagination has been relatively undervalued suggests the operation of sexism in its less usual form. In fact Ayckbourn has been a consistent and compassionate explorer of the hidden life of Mrs Average, revealing through such characters as Vera and Marjorie in *Just Between Ourselves*, and Lucy Compton in *Confusions*, not only the suppressed pain and rage but the curious power of such apparently powerless women.

Susan, the heroine of *Woman In Mind*, is the kind of woman who defines herself only by her relationships to others – in this case, her husband, Gerald, a smug vicar engrossed in writing a sixty-page history of the parish, Muriel, her Mrs Grundy of a sister-in-law, and her son, Rick, incomunicado in some religious-philosophical commune in Hemel Hempstead. To compensate for this less than ideal family, Susan has invented a glamorous dream family which, forming a neat opposition-movement, consists of husband, brother and daughter, all devoted to her, and living in genteel glory on a vast country estate. These figments of wish-fulfilment, conjured into hallucinatory life by a bump on the head from the garden rake, administer to Susan adoringly at first, but later become more unpredictable and even menacing; before she succumbs finally to her presumably fatal injuries, pleading, like a deranged Dido, "December bee, December bee".

The role is a relentlessly demanding one. Susan is from the outset in *extremis*; she is also a character in transition – from her previous mousiness via a triumphant sense of self-worth, to that self's tragic disintegration. Julia McKenzie, something of an Ayckbourn veteran, turns in a credible performance that rises in pitch convincingly as the action progresses, though perhaps lacks a certain depth in the

earlier scenes. The main problem is that she looks a shade too young and bouncy for a down-trodden vicar's wife in her forties, and this is made more noticeable by the fact that Martin Jarvis as Gerald looks a good deal too old to be her husband. It is hard to feel that there has ever been a real reciprocity between them, and the pathos of Susan's predicament depends to some extent on the sense that mutual feelings have been lost. Though there is much to relish in Jarvis's characterization, it veers a little too close to parody at times. Josephine Tewson as the martyred Muriel, however, gets the balance exactly right.

There is perhaps also a tendency for the main characters to present us, the audience, with sealed vignettes as a substitute for interacting with each other (the dream-family of course) and his whole social situation is intrinsically comic enough. Whereas the dream-family is rightly given to fulsome exaggeration, a touch more quiet naturalism would benefit the "real" one.

One of Susan's desperate questions is whether or not she is possessed by demons. The Gothic tone of the production makes this a real possibility, and while, dramatically, this is genuinely frightening (particularly unnering are the ventriloquist effects whereby Susan and her inventions exchange voices) it detracts slightly from the sense that all this is really the expression of her desperate wish-fulfilment and her dawning realization of its limitations. The final appearance of the dream-husband Andy attired in Mephistophelian scarlet is a Hammer Horror nudge we could do without.

Roger Glossop's set for Susan's fantasy garden (a ghostly back-projection of elegant oppressiveness and classical statues, completed with Watteau-esque swing) is all that is should be the real garden, however, seems insufficiently plucked and claustrophobic to justify poor Susan's deluded but truthful comment on it as "some place I wouldn't choose to live in, even in my wildest nightmares".

## 'A Bridge Through Time'

Sir, – In her letter (September 5), Zella Hourani says that I mentioned some "small errors" in my review of Lalla Abou Salif's *A Bridge Through Time* (August 15). I did mention some errors and could have mentioned several more. She also states that these errors were errors of transliteration and therefore more or less acceptable in a book which had been offered from an American edition. She says all this as "the editor responsible for the publication of this book in England".

First of all, the errors were not errors of transliteration. I shall only cite two examples: 1) The word *naks* means "setback". It originates from the verb "to lower" and is heavy with tragic medical, military and political connotations. This is the word President Nasser used to describe the 1967 defeat and the spiritual state which afflicted Egypt and the Arab world as a result. To quote this word correctly as *nokko*, which means "catastrophe", with comic dialect overtones, is surely no "small" error.

2) If someone living in Cheyne Walk, say, were to describe herself as overlooking a "tributary" of the Thames, one would surely wonder what image of London she had in mind. Similarly, with someone living in Zamalet and thinking she overlooked a tributary of the Nile. There were at least twenty errors of this type.

Second, when Zella Hourani claims to be "the editor responsible" etc, what exactly is she responsible for? By her account, none other than passing on the US edition to a British printer.

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## Beyond the conventions

Oswyn Murray

SOPHOCLES  
The Theban Plays  
BBC2

It is not surprising that most previous attempts to present Greek tragedy on television have been disasters; there might seem little point in trying to transfer a form of theatre bawled through masks over a hundred feet at an audience of more than ten thousand on to the most private and intimate of all forms of mass communication. All the more should we salute Don Taylor's remarkable achievement in giving us a version of Sophocles' Theban plays which not only succeeds in the impossible, but also manages to say important things about the plays themselves. This is surely the dramatic event of the year on television. Perhaps we should remember that the Greeks thought of tragedy as a popular art: Aristotle was only repeating general opinion when he said that the people were better judges of tragedy than those who think they are experts.

There is careful thought and planning behind this success of Don Taylor and his producer Louis Marks. Taylor, rightly dissatisfied with existing translations for his purposes, has written his own (*Sophocles: The Theban Plays*, Methuen, Paperback, £1.95, 0 413 42460 X). It is in stressed verse, with choruses in stricter rhyme, and is both speakable and true to the original; his introduction and discussion of the problems of translating show that he has thought deeply about the purposes such a practical acting text must fulfil. The plays were recorded as live performances, which undoubtedly enhances their unity and sense of

occasion. The sets are simple arenas, the costumes timeless, slightly Victorian: it is as if we are in some strange world of space where only the human values are fully familiar. But what make the productions work as modern versions of the plays are the performances by the finest actors of our day; all, including the chorus, make their parts meaningful in modern terms.

Sophocles never meant the plays as a trilogy; *Antigone*, in action the latest, was in fact written a generation before his last play, *Oedipus at Colonus*, which is the central one in this performance. But they retain a strange unity: the cross-references between them show that Sophocles had throughout his life a single conception of the Theban story and its uses; and the main characters, Creon, Oedipus, Teiresias, Antigone, remain to him constant across the decades.

There is a price to be paid in treating the three plays as a unity: except in terms of the story line, *Oedipus at Colonus* does not work as a centre play, especially when followed by the vigorous certainties and zestful violence of *Antigone*. But the *Oedipus at Colonus* is very difficult anyway for a modern audience since, unlike the other two, it offends us in ways which no Athenian would have understood. The messages of *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone* present no such difficulties of translation; these two plays have become archetypal myths in western society, and their form is so perfect that they have stood as models for all later tragic drama: they are if anything too familiar. But formally *Oedipus at Colonus* is, in the words of Aristotle, "as nature is not, episodic, like a bad tragedy". Worse, incest and the tyranny of the state are commonplaces to the modern world; our true taboos concern the subjects of the *Oedipus at Colonus*, old age and

death. Anthony Quayle as the aged Oedipus succeeds in shocking our sensibilities only too profoundly. His Oedipus is not a pleasant sight, an old man railing at his undeserved misfortunes, cursing his sons and his city, begging for asylum like an old tramp. Sophocles' rage at the indignities of old age comes through fiercely. And this makes us understand the poignancy of those choral lyrics about the beauty of the physical world of Colonus that Yents so loved. Oedipus' slow progress to resignation and to his peaceful end is more true to the mystery of death than all the rhetoric of Hermann Brahm.

In *Oedipus the King*, Michael Pennington gives to his Oedipus a sense of moral dignity which makes his gradual uncovering of the truth terrifying; and his physical closeness to Jocasta (Claire Bloom) gives a real horror to her quicker, more instinctive understanding; John Gielgud is the perfect Teiresias. It is a most powerful presentation of a play whose classic perfection defies reinterpretation.

*Antigone* is the play most helped by this unified production. We have watched Creon (John Shrapnell) developing through two earlier tragic events: we see why he has become what he is, why he needs to uphold the human values of the city, firmly and with justice. This is a very quiet and determined Creon, no ranting tyrant or personification of the state, but a ruthless and reasonable ruler who knows what is needful after civil war. Not until his son questions his decision does he lose his temper, and so reveals his most human trait, a love of family which cannot bear the thought of division between himself and his son. With that vindictiveness which only Sophocles' gods have, they use this human weakness to bring him lower even than Oedipus, despite the fact that he has repented in time: they cause him to

delay over rituals required by them, while they easily arrange the murder of Antigone, his son and his wife, ensuring that he feels responsible for all. This is a Creon to replace the superficial dictator that most modern producers fantasize. The final words of the chorus as he slumps in his throne, with all human dignity destroyed, have a dreadful irony:

With our eyes  
We have seen the old man, through suffering  
become wise.

Wisdom for Sophocles is the recognition of man's worthlessness before God. If the play is not yet Creon's but still Antigone's, that is due to Juliet Stevenson, the finest Antigone that I have seen. Antigone is usually portrayed as some modern liberated heroine, the mouth-piece for truths that sound only too simplistic, too easy for Creon and the chorus in their different ways to knock down. But this Antigone evokes innocence and vulnerability alongside her stubborn moral certainty: she loves life, and does not want to be the bride of death, nor to be famous in story; her long lament and the strange lovers' tryst in the cave, which seem so irrelevant to those who see the plays concerned only with abstract principles, here become central.

Throughout the plays the same chorus of twelve men chants to music, in groups or together; they are good actors, whose faces, expressive in close-up, draw us into the action; they speak our response at each point, in the knowledge that we and they possess so far. They express the role of the audience as participants: I do not remember seeing a production which managed to present so successfully that insight which Hegel first had, of what lies beneath the strange formal convention of the Greek chorus.

## Innocent and broad

Alan Jenkins

Mona Lisa  
Odeon, Haymarket

"A tall thin black tart" is the phrase, pungent and exact, used by ex-con George to describe Simone (Cathy Tyson), the girl he ferries in his Jag from West End hotels to an Arab's Hampstead mansion (here he is offered a silver tray of tea in his car while Simone, silhouetted against an upstairs window, pines her trade). As delivered by Hoskins, with the affection, braggadocio and vulnerability he has made integral to the complicated villains that are his trade, the line is one of many felicities in Neil Jordan's new film. George, in fact, isn't much of a villain. His complications are as follows: he is separated from his wife, and making tentative steps towards closeness – as yet more longed for than affirmed – with his daughter; he has come out of gaol to find that his old boss Mortwell has prospered – as drug-and-vice peddler to the respectable, as owner of a Soho seaze-joint and as blackmail – and that the world is a not entirely comprehensible place.

When not strapped up rather coyly on plush counterpoises, Simone haunts the nastier end of the market, the King's Cross meat-rack she has escaped from, in the hope of remaking a connection with a younger girl, also a prostitute, who was once important to her. George takes up the search himself, and plunges (as much of an innocent as anyone could be) into the peep-shows and massage parlours, a phantasmagoric set-up of winding staircases, peeling wallpaper, disinfected hoots and teenage girls who are all more or less permanently dependent on heroin, ergo on the tricks they turn for their masters who more or less casually abuse them. The cash-porn-heroine nexus sucks George in, chews him up and – nearly – spits him out. His huffed outrage and bottled-up sexual tension drive him to a sort of moral crusade, fatally confused with his fixation on Simone and with an obsessive hatred of the sadistic black pimp Anderson.

When the once-brutalized, now poised old conspiratorial Simone mentions her fears for her young friend, hinting at the dark appetites of "any sadistic bastard into whose hands she might fall", the film's moral compass is

could fail, we suspect that the trail of corruption and cocaine will end in high places, and we are not disappointed.

We have come across some of this before: in 1940s Hollywood film noir (the ex-con, the night-club, the whore with a heart of gold); in both of Jordan's earlier films, *Angel* (the dangerous laws and logic of a 'criminal underworld') and *Company of Wolves* (the sexually charged depiction of innocence); and in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (almost everything, though mainly the simple-minded attempt to rescue a young prostitute and the violent loathing of her exploiters). Nothing in the film suggests that Jordan is unaware of this, and that is part of its problem. Hoskins and Tyson put in impressive performances, suggest human subtleties and passions everywhere, and are everywhere sabotaged by Jordan's self-consciousness. There are many witty exchanges, there is some affecting business between George and his daughter, but too often the alternative to a would-be tough-mindedness and allusive cool is a sentimental stab at sincerity. The film's stylized framing of a hellish London night-world reminds one of how much better, with how much more bite and conviction and disgust, such scenes were evoked in Martin Amis's novel *Other People*. Some of the dialogue, along with the stylization, suggests that Jordan doesn't know the London scene – the London language-scene, the speech of people in occupations such as these – all that well, and has not imagined it all that vividly either.

The denouement has Simone reunited with Cathy in Brighton and the light of their lesbian attachment dawning on poor, duped George. The closing scenes, of explosive reorientation and violence, mix bitterness and cliché. Hope lies in the future, of course: In George, his daughter and his loyal friend Thomas linked hand in hand as they trot away from this squalor into a sunlit park. The film contains ample evidence that Jordan can direct scenes of great visual beauty and originality: his story "Night in Tunisia" must be one of the most affecting pieces of writing to have come from an Irish writer in the last few years; somewhere he needs to find a story, or a drama, or just an idea, that will bring these ample gifts together.

That will be a moment to be in on.

## Letters

claim so reputable a role as that of "ghost". In this instance, she was counterfeiter; and the most maddening part of her deception for Chaplin must have been the thanks for her "invaluable editorial assistance" which she coolly attributed to him on the verso of the title-page.

I should add that, as a historian, I am wholly grateful to Professor Geduld and the Indiana University Press for making this strange text available once more for proper evaluation.

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## John Dryden

Sir, – In his review of my *John Dryden* (August 8), David Nokes makes a number of untrue and/or misleading assertions which, for the sake of potential readers of the book, it would be useful to point out.

First, Nokes says that I offer the famous lines about the theatre in Dryden's *Anne Killigrew Ode* "as a straightforward piece of autobiographical"; thus implying (a) that I display a naive unawareness of the problems involved in using such poetry as biographical evidence, and (b) that the lines connote *by themselves* my case for seeing a crucial turning-point in Dryden's career in the mid-1680s. Neither implication is correct. The Ode is adduced as one item in a complex body of evidence, presented with lengthy accompanying arguments and many appropriate caveats.

Second, Nokes alleges that, in my book, "poems, or passages from poems, are confidently pronounced 'good' or 'bad' according to certain clear criteria". I am indeed concerned (as any writer of an introductory book

on a prolific and uneven writer must be) to discriminate between those parts of Dryden's work which are of living interest and those which are, in one way or another, limited or dull. But I don't crudely "pronounce" poems or passages "good" or "bad". My judgments are based on specific examples, analysed as fully as space allows. Nokes finds my discussion of two passages from *The Conquest of Granada* "heavily loaded", but, significantly, he doesn't show why, or if, he finds it unfair or inaccurate. Readers will judge for themselves.

Third, Nokes says that I find Dryden's verses to be particularly prominent "in Dryden's satiric poetry or the 1660s and 70s". The ignorance of the basic facts of Dryden's career revealed here, I should like to reassure readers, is Nokes's not mine. Apart from *Mac Flecknoe* (which was, anyway, not published till the 1680s), Dryden wrote no satires in these two decades.

Fourth, Nokes dismisses my claim that the best of Dryden's later verse transcends most of that from the first two decades as "unhappily perverse". Readers will judge for themselves whether my fully argued claims for the later Dryden are excessive. But Nokes is quite wrong to suggest that they are eccentric. To say nothing of earlier critics, a number of respected modern writers, none of them specialists on the Restoration period (one thinks of John Broadbent, Patrick Crutwell, Donald Davie, Geoffrey Grigson, Emrys Jones, C. H. Sisson, George Steiner, Charles Tomlinson), have gone out of their way to praise Dryden's translations, while it is difficult to think of a single comparable general critic who has spoken up for the plays. And readers of my book will see that, far from disparaging *Abraham and Achitophel* and *Mac Flecknoe* in the blanket way Nokes alleges, I praise them

in both poems very highly indeed, and in terms which, I venture to suggest, might have more appeal for general readers of poetry than those commonly advanced by Dryden specialists – which, in my experience, generally have the effect of ensuring that, once they have graduated, students never open their Dryden again.

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## Magnus Hirschfeld

Sir, – I was interested to read Rosemary Dinnage's review (September 5) of Charlotte Wolff's book *Magnus Hirschfeld: A portrait of a pioneer in sexology*. However, she has made some mistakes.

First, she refers to a Chinese secretary, Tao Li (full name, Li Shieu Toog) was both a pupil and lover of Hirschfeld, but was never his secretary.

Second, she says that little is told in the book about Hirschfeld's own sexual life. However, Dr Wolff states on page 9 that Hirschfeld was "a masked man", who left few remains of his personal life because in the Weimar Republic homosexuals were persecuted. Nevertheless, on pages 186 and 187, Wolff gives a clear indication of Hirschfeld's way of life and sexual needs.

Hirschfeld's complexity of character and the magnitude of his professional life make it impossible to condense a portrait of this man into a less extensive work than has been produced by Dr Wolff. Her remarkable book has used a wide canvas to reveal the richness of his personality.

MARLENE KNIGHT  
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## COMMENTARY

## The genesis of painting

Tim Hilton

*Je Suis le Cahier: The Sketchbooks of Picasso*  
Royal Academy, until November 19

ARNOLD GLIMCHER and MARC GLIMCHER  
(Editors)

*Je Suis le Cahier: The sketchbooks of Picasso*  
350pp. Thames and Hudson. £36.  
0 500 09173 0

There is more than a touch of showmanship in the presentation of *Je Suis le Cahier* at the Royal Academy. The exhibition occupies some of the smaller galleries at Burlington House, but the high ceilings, drapes and dramatic but gloomy lighting seem almost to make Picasso's drawings secondary. They are in cabinets set on close to the ground for a person of average height and are dwarfed by panels of photographs, all of them familiar, of Picasso at work and at play. There are also photographs within the cabinets themselves, showing pages of bound notebooks that are not visible. These are often on a larger scale than the notebook itself. A Picasso documentary film runs in one of the galleries. The show is like a huge paste-up of the way that artists on artists are presented in colour supplements.

Picasso had an especial relationship with the camera, and not only because it helped him to assert his personality. He was also anxious to use photography to record his art. In the late 1920s, at the height of his influence, he made an arrangement with the publisher Christian Zervos whereby all his work was photographed and published in special supplements of Zervos's magazine *Cahiers d'Art*. The archive thus assembled is still the basis of Picasso studies. But there were a number of things concealed from Zervos, works in all media that we did not know about until after Picasso's death. The present notebooks were among these most private possessions. The handsome Thames and Hudson book, which is not exactly a catalogue of the exhibition, gives us the basic information about them. It contains, first of all, a check-list of 175 notebooks dating from 1894 to 1967. The books are briefly summarized and a representative drawing is given. Secondly, there are reproductions of every page of six of the notebooks. These belong to 1905, when Picasso painted "Les Saltimbanques" and to 1907, the date of the "Démiseilles d'Avignon". A notebook of 1916 belongs to the period when late synthetic Cubism alternated with a more "classical" style of drawing and work for the ballet *Parade*. In 1926 we observe Picasso's interest in Surrealism. The 1940 book comes from the time when he was on the Atlantic coast at Royan, while that of 1962 outlines one of the last of his big mythological paintings. The contents of each of these notebooks are described by Picasso scholars, all of them American.

It hardly needs saying that the experience of looking at these books is especially stirring, for they take us right into the genesis of so many great paintings. Yet they are, after all, notebooks; and these battered and crumpled carnets, containing bus tickets, calling cards and miscellaneous jottings as well as drawings, were obviously carried in the pocket, especially during Picasso's earlier years, and may have had no important status in the studio. Of course, Picasso scarcely ever touched a sheet without conviction. But his supreme work as a draftsman is not here. His best drawings are on separate and larger sheets of better quality paper, as one would expect. The Royal Academy show gives far less of display of mastery than did *Picasso's Picasso* of 1981, when the artist's private collection was first shown in London. Instead, the notebooks force our concentration on to the planning of paintings that are not exhibited. It is appropriate that "Les Saltimbanques" should be the first of these, for in a sense the whole of the rose period (when Picasso worked only on paper or card) was a preparation for this early major picture. In 1980 E. A. Carmean published the fullest account of this painting, some preliminary drawings and various antecedents from the tradition of the *commedia dell'arte*. In a catalogue that accompanied a Washington exhibition of the picture itself, using X-radiography,

he then revealed the existence of two earlier versions of the painting below the one we now know. Carmean introduces notebook 35 in much the spirit of this exhibition, and notes with some satisfaction that the new evidence tends to confirm his previous investigations.

Another approach to notebook 35 might be to comment on its balance between observation and imagination. Or one might like to consider the preoccupation with adolescence, so important in the years before Cubism, and beautifully expressed in these sketches. But this is to be somewhat speculative. Carmean's approach is that of a museum director who is properly concerned to catalogue his collection accurately. Yet it is clear that he has been



A drawing by Picasso from notebook 38, which dates from 1906 to 1907, from the exhibition reviewed here.

moved by his researches. This is not surprising. Most commentators on Picasso find the record of the experiences of his life to be affecting, even unsettling. Robert Rosenblum, in his essay "Les Démiseilles", confesses "I had always a crazy hunch that if anyone in the history of the human species might forever outwit Death . . . it would be that diabolical Spaniard." The rest of the essay is more measured. From handwritten notes in one of the many sketchbooks devoted to the "Démiseilles d'Avignon", he conjectures that Picasso may have looked at Degas monotypes of brothel scenes before he began his painting. This is most plausible. Rosenblum is correct to call attention to some pages in this notebook showing a figure which, as he says, is "a kind of homunculus, infant, or embryo". The figure is unexplained, though as it happens we do know a related painting (No 1498 in *Palau y Fabre's* catalogue). And may there not be a connection with the Goya self-portraits and with the foetal imagery of the blue-period painting "La Vie"?

For obvious reasons, it is frustrating not to be able to see the sketchbooks in their entirety. Furthermore, in that part of the catalogue which gives selections from the notebooks there is no commentary and little attempt to relate individual pages to the larger issues of Picasso's art. None the less there is much to be learnt from this part of the exhibition. For instance, notebook 75 contains two drawings which are very close to "Famille au Bord de la

Mer", a remarkable painting which Picasso hid in his private collection. It was never photographed and remained quite unknown before it appeared in the first exhibition of the *daïton* (works by Picasso accepted by the French State after his death) in Paris in 1979. Since the notebook is inscribed with Picasso's Dinaré address there seems good reason to redate this picture to the summer of 1922, which Picasso spent in the Brittany resort. The *conservateurs* who first catalogued the artist's estate believed that the painting belongs to the stay in Antibes the following year, and this was accepted by the organizers of *Picasso's Picasso*. But the work belongs more naturally to the Dinaré atmosphere, next to "La Course", than to the

ly male) has an explanation nearer to home. All young parents fear that their infant child is not breathing when asleep: Picasso has transferred this emotion to his son, and has himself become the person who is watched.

We know from Françoise Gilot's *Life with Picasso*, (soon to be republished by Virago) that his fear of their children dying in the night was extreme, even phobic; and her wonderful book suggests much more about the contrast of night and day, darkness and light, innocence and brutality, that filled his imagination during the years when his iconography was at its most eloquent. It is noticeable that the sketchbooks are not as revelatory about these matters, as one might have anticipated. The catalogue records only seven notebooks for the whole of the 1930s, the period most in question. Why was this? One's first conjecture is that the closeness of the notebooks has to do with Picasso's liaison with Marie-Thérèse Walter. Although she filled so much of his art her existence was kept secret. Perhaps this somehow rendered the privacy of the notebooks otiose (though of course her existence, if not her image, is to be found in notebook 96 of 1928, kept at Dinaré when Picasso had clandestinely installed her in the town while he took a family holiday). Secondly, it would be worth investigating her much more inclined he now was to compose straight on to the canvas. And no doubt the *Vollard Suite*, the hundred etchings made between 1930 and 1937, took over some of the functions of the notebooks. At all events, the use of such books was clearly of lesser importance during this decade. Yet there are a famous series of drawings which seem to revise their procedures. These are the studies for "Guernica", which Picasso reserved for separate treatment and indeed for publication. The process by which he defined the mural picture must have been indebted to long experience with the notebooks we see at the Royal Academy today.

This revival of the notebook mode in the fortnight before he began to paint "Guernica" also helped Picasso to mingle political themes with long-standing personal motifs. The catalogue of *Je Suis le Cahier* now presents two notebooks of 1962 which enable us to understand the deeply rooted inspiration of the paintings known as "Rape of the Sabines". These pictures resemble "Guernica" in that they are an immediate reaction to a world event, have a neo-classical background and were given a political role. They were begun at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, and Picasso's inclination to make anti-war paintings was encouraged by his communist friends Edward Pignon and Hélène Parmelin. However, we ought to recall (his comrades did not like to recognize this) that Picasso's anti-Americanism was not solely a product of the Cold War. He had disliked *yanqui* military might since 1898, when as a young man he had seen, and drawn, the humiliated Spanish troops returning from Cuba after their defeat by the Americans. Gert Schiff's admirable essay on "The Rape of the Sabines" is not much concerned with politics, however, for he wishes to demonstrate how Picasso's interest in David's "Sabines" and Poussin's "Massacre of the Innocents" was mingled with a memory of an accident suffered by his mistress Dora Maar twenty years before, and how the images of the 1962 paintings, first explored in the notebooks, must be traced back even as far as the "Démiseilles d'Avignon". On this last visual point, however, it is hard to agree with Schiff. In particular, he assumes that the 1962 paintings are masterpieces. It would be wiser to say that they are visibly from the hand of a master. One has similar reservations about many of the drawings on show at the Royal Academy, from earlier as well as from later years. As so often happens with Picasso exhibitions, we are made to examine the workings of his imagination rather than the naked achievements of his art. With such an artist as Picasso this bias is no doubt inevitable, and the discovery of his notebooks emphasizes that we are still far from understanding his thoughts. Meanwhile, it would be good to see an exhibition that was more purely visual – a critic's show, or (I would prefer this) one selected by another artist.

## In pursuit of the allusive

Rosemary Ashton

H. J. JACKSON (Editor)  
Samuel Taylor Coleridge  
213pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50  
(paperback, £6.95).

0 19 254189 7  
ANTHONY JOHN HARDING  
Coleridge and the Inspired Word  
187pp. McGill-Queen's University Press.  
£27.50.

0 715 1008 7  
STEVEN KNAPP  
Personification and the Sublime: Milton to  
Coleridge  
178pp. Harvard University Press. £14.95.

0 674 66320 9  
LUCY NEWLYN  
Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of  
Allusion  
214pp. Oxford University Press. £22.50.

0 19 812855 X  
RAIMONDA MODIANO  
Coleridge and the Concept of Nature  
270pp. Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State  
University Press. \$25.

0 8130 0808 5

Coleridge was his own first critic and has scarcely suffered neglect by any generation of critics since. The flow of words seems in no danger of abating. Indeed, H. J. Jackson, introducing his selection of Coleridge's writings for the Oxford Authors series, predicts that the edition of his complete works now in progress – particularly the hitherto unpublished notebooks and marginalia – "will be the basis of a new image of Coleridge". This may be so, though it is in the nature of literary scholars to make claims for their work which may seem excessive to the regular reader of Coleridgean. These four critical works dealing with Coleridge all naturally begin with claims to be doing something new. Yet a tell-tale element in three of the four – Harding, Knapp and

Modiano – is a prominent and self-conscious wrestling with recent rivals in Coleridge criticism. Each seems to feel his or her thesis to be so close to someone else's – say, Abrams's or McFarland's or Elinor Shaffer's – that it needs to be frequently distinguished from it. The skirmishes can be of such an intrusive and unseemly kind as to distract the attention from Coleridge.

In *Coleridge and the Inspired Word*, Anthony Harding grapples with Elinor Shaffer in an attempt to express new insights into Coleridge's biblical studies. His aim is to establish, via a study of Coleridge's utterances on inspiration, "important connections between Coleridge's ventures into Biblical scholarship and his poetics". The method yields some interesting insights, such as the suggestion that the speaker in "The Eolian Harp", in interrupting his own visionary outpourings and dismissing them – in the person of Sara Coleridge – as "shapings of the unregenerate mind".

can be seen as in one sense imitating in a highly condensed form the centuries-old pattern of inspired utterance followed by the devout sifting of the results to determine whether what they contained was true doctrine or specious.

There is also a useful restatement of the much-studied shift in *Biographia Literaria* from the monism of Schelling's identity of nature and mind to a definition of the imagination "that is indissolubly linked with the Judeo-Christian idea that God is the ground of all things". But Harding's book is dogged with jostling references to other scholars, his claim to do anything new with Coleridge's poetics is left largely unfulfilled, and his chapters on Coleridge's successors – Mourice, Sterling, James Marsh and Emerson – are, though interesting, too loosely connected to their source in Coleridge to constitute a unified view of the theme announced in the title.

An even looser connection is established in Steven Knapp's *Personification and the Sublime: Milton to Coleridge*. Though not exclusively concerned with Coleridge on personi-

fication, the sublime, allegory and Milton, the author uses Coleridge as his main frame of reference. Indeed, he disarmingly suggests that his short study is itself Coleridgean:

Partly because of its Coleridgean orientation . . . this book has at least one of the characteristics that have irritated readers of Coleridge himself: a mixture of extreme specificity (in the concentration on a narrow strand of one literary tradition) and grandiose philosophical speculation (in the claims that this tradition exemplifies a broader problem in the period's conception of literature and of the self).

That his book may irritate the reader proves an accurate prophecy; that it combines particularity with philosophical speculation is a claim less easy to assent to. Where Knapp is "like Coleridge" is in the difficulty the critic experiences in paraphrasing his prose. "Yet still Obscurity's a welcome guest", we might say with Byron when trying to make sense of Knapp's attempt on the Fancy/Imagination distinction in *Biographia Literaria*:

Like genius, the secondary imagination threatens to lapse into the eccentric inconsequence of fancy, sliding pointlessly from image to image. But without such tendencies of differentiation it would be indistinguishable from primary imagination; the "conscious will" would lose itself in a mad identification of imaginary recreation with involuntary perceptual fact. Just as the symbol needed to be saved from literal identity by the persistence of allegorical difference, so the imagination must be saved by fancy from its own potential violence.

There is some wit in Knapp's book, as when he notices that Sin in *Paradise Lost* is momentarily "relieved of her allegorical duties" by Milton when he allows her to describe herself sitting "pensive", awaiting the birth of Satan. There is, too, shrewd observation in the remark that in recollecting the having-crossed-the-Alps experience in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth is enacting a "Kantian scenario: an experience of failure indirectly reveals the preternatural strength of desire and hope". Of nonsense there is more, however. So free-wheeling is Knapp's approach to his subject that he allows himself to state that the leech-gatherer

in "Resolution and Independence" stands for "nothing else but the condensed Spenserian stanza (measured, antique, opaque, elusive) whose persistent and finally pointless repetition constitutes this very poem". The leech-gatherer is, at the same time, "like" various old men in *The Faerie Queene*, "like" the old man in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*, and "like" the disguised Satan in *Paradise Regained*. Knapp presents us with an extreme example of the problem of knowing where to stop when in pursuit of a connection or an allusion.

Knowing where to stop is essential for Lucy Newlyn, who boldly makes the attractive but dangerous siren "allusion" the subject of her book, *Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion*. She embraces the possible objection of arbitrarily privileging one allusion in a poem – say, to Wordsworth – over another in the same poem – to Milton, for example – by concentrating exclusively on the mutual allusiveness of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Thus Wordsworth is privileged in her reading of Coleridge's allusions, as is Coleridge in her reading of Wordsworth. The justification is that Wordsworth and Coleridge were all in all to one another during the years spent together at Alfoxden in 1797-8. The thesis, interestingly, is that both poets subsequently mythologized the *annus mirabilis* in their poetry, making of it an episode of more paradisaical poetical agreement than had actually occurred. The logic of the psychology decrees that each was obsessed by his image of the other, so that allusions to one another are likely to be frequent and of primary importance.

It is an attractive topic, and one which Newlyn handles elegantly. She is not entirely proof against arguments of the very-like-a-whale variety. Like Knapp, she courts excess in her reading of "Resolution and Independence", finding that in it Wordsworth "appears to be spying not just on the old man, but on his former poem". The poem in question is the episode of the discharged soldier in Book IV of *The Prelude*, in which Wordsworth recounts

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having hidden behind a hawthorn bush to observe the soldier. That there are interesting similarities between the two pieces is not in doubt; that one represents a kind of "spying" on the other may be thought too fanciful an idea. Conversely, illiveness may seem to the dedicated seeker to be present by its very absence. Thus the lime tree in Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" is, according to Newlyn, "carefully juxtaposed" with Wordsworth's yew tree in "Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree".

In theory, no word is safe from the interpretation that it either appears or fails to appear as a meaningful echo from another man's poem. Yet in practice Newlyn observes (and cautions, rooting her hearing of echoes in such a probable psychology that she accepts most of her suggestions. For it seems to me that Wordsworth and Coleridge do constitute a special case in this respect. Coleridge's envy of Wordsworth's superiority, success and fortunate childhood is deftly demonstrated to be present in such a poem as "Frost at Midnight". Equally, and most impressively, Newlyn argues that Coleridge's presence in *The Prelude* is as an apparent sharer of vital experience but an actual loser. While quoting flatteringly from "Frost at Midnight" the phrase "sweet birth-place", what Wordsworth is also doing is "trumping" Coleridge's childhood – deprived, city-bent – and establishing his theme: the superiority of his own country childhood and its essential role as shaper of his, and by implication any great poet's, imaginative faculty.

Wordsworth's function as destroyer of Coleridge's self-confidence as a poet also figures in Rimmonda Modiano's tightly argued book, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*. Her aim is to retell the story of Coleridge's ambivalent and changing views on nature in its relationship to the mind, God's pattern and poetry. In doing so, she persuasively notices "a number of revealing links between Coleridge's deteriorating friendship with Wordsworth and his increasing alienation from nature". Wordsworth was "constantly in the way, conquering and appropriating more of the territory Coleridge felt should have been his". One hears envy and withdrawal from the race in Coleridge's remark of 1801 that "few men can boast, I believe, of so intimate an acquaintance with her Ladyship [Nature] as Wordsworth".

Modiano, while showing some anxiety about the closeness of her argument to Thomas McFarland's, demonstrates anew Coleridge's simultaneous attraction to and recoil from the Schelliegan position in *Biographia Literaria*. She also argues with patience and clarity that Coleridge's position on the sublime lies between

that of Burke, for whom sublime attributes inhere in natural landscape which trigger off an attitude of mind, and Kant, for whom the mind triumphs over threatening apparitions in nature by "initiating its pseudo-crisis" which it "resolves without suffering any damage". Though tempted from time to time to see a simple reversal in Coleridge's position from early delight in nature to late suspicion of her charms, Modiano scrupulously refuses to succumb. She ends her painstaking study on a surprising yet apt note: a letter of 1825 in which Coleridge returns to the playful tone of 1801 and again gives Nature the victory.

In Youth and early Manhood the Mind and Nature are, as it were, two rival Artists, both potent Magicians, mid engaged, like the King's daughter and the rebel Genie in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, in sharp

## Highly productive

Gillian Beer

DESMOND KING-HELE  
*Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets*  
294pp. Macmillan. £27.50.  
0333 390105

Erasmus Darwin believed in compost: life renews itself by the energies of its own decay. Death vigorously discharges new forms of life. Mountains, even, are "monuments of past delight" where the progeny of plants and creatures are impacted into solid rock. Darwin repudiated the Augustans' insistence on dirt and ordure simply as waste matter. Whereas Pope characterizes Grub Street in *The Dunciad* by images of disease and rubbish, Darwin reclaimed even such material for optimistic poetry by insisting in *The Loves of the Plants* that the creative cycle of growth needs earth, anger and sexual eagerness. Darwin kept a continuity with earlier eighteenth-century poetry by his redoubtable use of the heroic couplet, and his emphasis on dispersal and renewal. His zealous, even gaudy, praise of reproductive powers captured the imagination of his immediate contemporaries and of the next generation of Romantic writers.

In Desmond King-Hele's learned and enthusiastic study it sometimes seems as if Darwin were the single spring from which flowed the related rivers of Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, as well as such tributaries and nicks as Brooke Boothby, Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Mary Tighe, Anna Seward and Eleanor Porden. Of this last writer King-

Hele mildly and surprisingly remarks: "Eleanor Anne Porden (1795–1825) is not well known today, but in her time she won more acclaim than Shelley or Keats." The work is full of out-of-the-way readings, as well as much in major figures, all of it bent to the pursuit of Darwin's presence in the work of other poets. King-Hele declares that he will concentrate "more on apparent verbal echoes than on resemblances in ideas" in order to delimit his project. He declares also that he is not concerned with mutual indebtedness, though his good sense leads him to abandon that criterion when discussing Crabbe and Darwin, and to set it somewhat to one side when analysing Blake and Darwin. His frankness is disarming, but the book is bound to raise in the mind of the reader some general questions about the importance of context for pinpointing the presence of allusion, and about simultaneous echoes from other writers that King-Hele is inclined to attribute solely to Darwin. Writers share as well as shape the discourse of their time and sometimes the verbal echoes will seem extremely slight, sometimes extremely general: for example "Tighe introduces Psyche as 'Fair Psyche' at the start of a line; and so does Darwin" or, of Keats and Darwin, "They both had faith in beauty" although he does there go on to specify ways in which Darwin's conceptions of beauty affected Keats.

King-Hele recognizes how various are the relations of the writers he discusses to Darwin. But he does not at all reveal Darwin's response to the earlier writers by whom his language was nurtured: He refers to the tag of Darwin as "the last of the Augustans" but does not con-

sider its implications. Darwin's heroic couplets serve to contain the energy he celebrates and to assert its essential productiveness. Yes! smiling Flora drives her armed car Through the thick ranks of vegetable war: Herb, shrub, and trees, with strong emotions rise For light and air, and battle in the skies. The clinching rhymes and strongly marked parallelisms give some substance to Coleridge's assertion that "Darwin possesses the epideictic of Poetry without the cutis", yet the new and specific play on the word *emotions* suggests fresh "Romantic" possibilities.

As King-Hele demonstrates, other poets such as Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats could use Darwin's phrases to break up older forms of feeling. Darwin's faith in aspiration and in fundaments was essential to the Romantic project in England. The withdrawal from that profusion can be read in Shelley's "The Triumph of Life" and King-Hele suggests another revealing parallel with Darwin's "triumph of despotic Love" here. Shelley has turned from Darwin's confidence in the benign eye of productivity and sees instead the endless obliterateness of such fecundity.

It would not be difficult to make King-Hele's learned, instructive, and mildly monomaniacal enterprise sound absurd, but the cumulative disclosure of Darwin's presence (welcomed or resisted by other writers) is, in the end, convincing. The work will be of great value to other scholars and gives moreover a delightful picture of the relation between Erasmus Darwin's fertile imagination in his daily life and to his art. It is a labour of love well dedicated and well achieved.

genial tumbling and tripping of ideas in the 1790s. To Thelwall, Coleridge gave this shrewd account of himself in 1796:

As to me, my face, unless when animated by immediate eloquence, expresses great Sloth, & great, indeed almost idealic, good nature. "Tis a mere canvas of a face: fat, flabby, & expressive chiefly of inexpression. . . . As to my shape, 'tis a good shape enough, if measured – but my gait is awkward, & the walk, & the Whole man indicates indolence capable of energies. I am, & ever have been, a great reader – & have read almost every thing – a literary cormorant. . . .

And so it goes on, until he concludes, "Such am I". And such is the nature of critical interest in him that scholars and reviewers go on, and will go on, trying to outdo him in observations on his characteristic talents and concerns and in attempts to add to the Coleridgean image.

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## Understanding understanding

Richard E. Grandy

DAN SPERBER and DEIRDRE WILSON  
Relevance: Communication and cognition  
279pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £27.50 (paperback, £8.50).  
0631 137564

Irrelevance, in some political segments of the United States in the 1960s, was the most cardinal of sins, a sin that was attributed to communications as well as persons. As linguists, Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson contend that relevance is not only a virtue but a necessity of communication.

One major thesis, developed in the first chapter, is that the predominant theories of language in linguistics and philosophy give insufficient attention to the pragmatic, contextual factors that determine what is communicated by a linguistic message. Sperber and Wilson agree that too much attention is paid to the respects in which a language resembles a code – transparent to the initiates and impenetrable to others. They emphasize that linguistic messages require not only decoding but interpretation.

This message will not surprise readers familiar with recent work in artificial intelligence, where researchers have been stumbling over such obstacles as ambiguity since the precipitously optimistic forecasting of machine translation in the 1950s. But it is not sufficiently reinforced to impress the philosophers and linguists who perpetuate the encoding-decoding model that is in question. The ability to fix on the correct meaning of a multiply ambiguous remark is as ubiquitous and instantaneous, and as mysterious to model, as is the ability to walk across an unfamiliar room without bumping into the furniture or walls. In both cases, humans perform tasks – with neither effort nor conscious awareness – that we now know to involve extremely complex information processing. Understanding our unreflective abilities thus far exceeds our reflective abilities.

The technical term Sperber and Wilson prefer to employ to underline their emphasis on interpretation is "inferential communication". The point is that in addition to any decoding that relates a spoken or written sentence to its possible literal meanings the hearer or reader of the sentence must also infer which if any of

the literal meanings is the intended one. And if none of the literal meanings is intended then the task of inferring an alternative interpretation of what is communicated is required, as in irony, metaphor and slips of the tongue. Relevance is critical, for the fundamental assumption in interpreting sentences is that the speaker or writer intends the message to seem relevant to the interpreter. An apparently irrelevant remark requires further interpretation, perhaps because one does not fully grasp the situation, or the import of the remark, or that it was a joke.

But relevance does more than a positive duty. To appreciate a metaphor we must divine a meaning that is relevant to matters at hand, but we do not seek metaphors in every passing remark. The quest for a metaphorical meaning begins only when we consider the possibility that a remark is to be taken metaphorically, and this is only when we can judge the literal meaning to be irrelevant. Thus a thorough treatment of the wide variety of linguistic phenomena Sperber and Wilson canvass in their fourth and final chapter places a heavy burden on the linked ideas of relevance and irrelevance.

The authors do not rest content with the vague colloquial conception of relevance but develop a more technical, though still vague, characterization in their third chapter. Relevance is a matter of degree and their description captures this feature. According to Sperber and Wilson an assumption is more relevant in a given context to the extent that it has greater context effects and to the degree to which it is more easily processed. A context is identified as the set of assumptions the interpreter has in mind at the instant when the interpreting occurs. Among the assumptions normally part of the context of a conversation would be information about where the conversation is taking place, the identity of the participants, their relationships, any shared goals or projects, and so on.

Even in the most straightforward literal conversations sentences are unlike typical codes in that they require supplementation to be significant. For example, if someone says "We will finish it by Friday" the auditor must, in addition to being a competent English speaker, know what the project under discussion is, who, in addition to the speaker, is engaged in it, and what day it currently is. All of these bits of background information are part of the context as Sperber and Wilson use that term.

## Slowly retreading

J. F. M. Hunter

G. P. BAKER and P. M. S. HACKER  
Wittgenstein: Rules, grammar and necessity  
320pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £29.50.  
0631 130241

This is Volume Two of a projected series of analytical commentaries on Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. It covers sections 185–242 of that work – fourteen pages to all – so we have about twenty-five pages of commentary for every page of Wittgenstein's text. The book includes various sorts of material: essays giving overviews of various topics, an exegesis of each section, remarks on the translation where appropriate, and discussion of relevant passages collected from elsewhere in the *Investigations* or from other of Wittgenstein's voluminous writings.

In the preface, G. P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker say that, finding sections 185–242 especially difficult, and having found other writers merely floundering, they concluded that "the only safe recourse was to map the terrain by reference to the underlying writings in Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* and then to trace his thought slowly and carefully, avoiding the pitfall of jumping to a conclusion on the basis of a single remark or sentence". The second of these aims is a sort of motherhood item; whether the first is "the only safe recourse" is not clear to me. Certainly sometimes Baker and Hacker aggravate a particularly illuminating example Wittgenstein has given elsewhere, of a revealing alternative statement of a point, but often either the passage cited is in the same

or much the same words, or, if the words are substantially different, the sense is no clearer.

An example: on pages 241–2, where Wittgenstein's mystifying concept of a "form of life" is being investigated, passages are produced that put it past doubting that at one time or another, in place of this expression, Wittgenstein wrote "facts of living", "regular forms of actions", and "the forms of our lives". This seems an important advance, until we realize that these are themselves all obscure conceptions, and, hence, that although certain interpretations of Wittgenstein perhaps *couldn't* be right, given one or other of them, we are not much helped by them to see what is right. So much helped by them to see what is right. So much helped by them to see what is right. So much helped by them to see what is right.

While I never found it ham "jumping to a conclusion on the basis of a single remark", I am not sure that they always avoided the old sin of seeing just what they wanted to see. They talk a lot about the rules of language, and they attribute to Wittgenstein the view that speaking a language is a rule-governed activity. It is the first importance whether they are right about this, but they give no reason for the contention, and it does not even become clear what it means: whether they think Wittgenstein held that in putting together on average well-constructed sentences, we are in some serious sense following rules, or that, although we are not doing this, it would always be possible to work out a set of rules such that, if we did follow them, we would have produced just such a sentence, or what. Wittgenstein certainly talks quite a bit about rules, but this

Context effects are divided into three kinds. If the speaker had previously promised that the project would be finished by Thursday, then the context effect of the statement is to contradict one of the assumptions of the context. If completion had previously been promised for Friday but there was now some doubt, the statement would, if believed, have the context effect of strengthening one of the assumptions in the context. These two kinds of context effect are clear enough, even if the notion of strengthening an assumption is a rather subtle one.

The third kind of contextual effect is the addition of pertinent new information by contextual implication. One statement has another as a contextual implication when the latter is deducible from the combination of the first statement with the context – but only if the implicated statement is not deducible from the context or the first statement alone. Our theoretical understanding of this kind of contextual effect is dependent on our grasp of the special sense Sperber and Wilson give to deduction in their second chapter. If they were to allow the use of the usual deduction principles taught in elementary logic books then any statement would have numerous contextual implications in almost any context. Intuitively many of these implications are trivial and irrelevant. But to discard them on grounds of irrelevance would presuppose the concept that Sperber and Wilson are explaining!

Thus they choose the alternative route of severely restricting the usual deductive principles. They claim that the principles they eliminate are never used in spontaneous understanding. Justification for this central assertion is scant and there is likely to be a spirited, if quite technical debate among cognitive psychologists and logicians over this point. (A word of reassurance to some readers and warning to others – although the text is liberally sprinkled with examples, none is worked out in formal detail.)

Returning to the notion of context, one should note that a major background premise of Sperber and Wilson's approach is that the context is represented by linguistically expressed assumptions. This can be part of the larger parcel which holds that the spontaneous unconscious reasoning involved is correctly modelled as deductive inferences among linguistic items. While this position is perhaps the dominant one among cognitive psychologists, it is far from uncontroversial and Sperber and

Wilson ought perhaps to have given more consideration to the opposition.

The premise enters in many places. Part of context is supplied by perception, and the premise leads Sperber and Wilson to assume that the perceptual information is linguistically encoded. This excludes the possibility that some relevant spontaneous reasoning involves manipulation of picture-like images. The issue is a controversial one and merits more acknowledgement than the authors grant. To revert to an earlier example, it is implausible that we find our way across an unfamiliar room by spontaneously and unconsciously translating the problem into a set of geometrical propositions. Just how perceptual processing interacts with language processing is largely unknown.

Another essential element of context is knowledge of word meanings. Sperber and Wilson espouse the popular view that we have among our mental repositories dictionary and encyclopedia entries (not necessarily separate) for the words we know. But their account of the nature of the entries is not detailed enough to instil confidence that enough information is provided. For example, they say that the sole logical content of the mental dictionary entry for "yellow" is "colour of a certain hue". They do not elaborate on how the entry differentiates among colours nor on what relation to perception is required. What common sense and at least some cognitive psychologists tell us is required is something like an image representing the hue. Most non-mental dictionaries achieve this indirectly by referring to the colour of ripe lemons and thus evoking the image.

For all their rhetoric against the image of language as a code, Sperber and Wilson still present a conservative account of language understanding whose roots go deep in Western culture. The underlying assumption is that all knowledge lies in deductive relations among linguistic structures. Euclid's triumph in systematizing geometrical knowledge has provided the paradigm for knowledge ever since. But geometry found broader horizons in the nineteenth century, and some cognitive scientists are now seeking broader horizons for their discipline.

Seen in this longer historical perspective, *Relevance* is a systematic and provocative attempt to preserve on essentially Euclidean picture of knowledge while rejecting the narrower image of language as code. It would be a good book to read while waiting to see how the larger story comes out.

## On the energetic side

Stephen Plaice

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE  
*Torquato Tasso*  
Translated by Alan Brownjohn  
140pp. £4.95.  
0 946162 19 0  
HEINRICH VON KLEIST/LUDWIG TIECK/  
E. T. A. HOFFMANN  
*Six German Romantic Tales*  
Translated by Ronald Taylor  
146pp. £4.95.  
0 946162 17 4  
Angel Books, 3 Keleross Road, London N5 3QS.

Too much has been made of Goethe's dictum that the Romantic represents the sick, the Classical the healthy aspect of art. His own *Torquato Tasso* has often been regarded in the light of this definition, and the madness of Tasso interpreted as the failure of the Romantic imagination to accept even benevolent social constraints. Tasso's foil in the play is the statesman Antonio Montecatino, who personifies the worldly experience the poet lacks. But there is a balance in the characterization, since Tasso himself is a foil for Antonio's own thwarted poetry which he must suppress in order to conduct his diplomatic duties for the Duke of Ferrara. Antonio resents the freedom the poet is accorded, his popularity with

the ladies of the court, and the excessive value the Duke places on Tasso's utopian work *Jerusalem Delivered*, to which his own practical statescraft must take poor second place.

In his introduction to Alan Brownjohn's translation (first broadcast by BBC Radio 3 and reviewed in the TLS, May 7, 1982), T. J. Reed rightly presents the case for the defiance of Tasso's impetuous conduct at the court of Ferrara, and the case for the prosecution of Antonio's jealous motives, in fact those of the Renaissance court in general. Possessiveness, acquisitiveness, envy, the jostling for priority in love and esteem, these are the institutionalized follies which the courtly conventions allow, provided they are cloaked in dissimulation and intrigue. In contrast, Tasso's openhearted, utopian spirit shines through the Classical verse drama, whose Aristotelian conventions he alone dares to infringe, by drawing his sword in anger at Antonio and by physically expressing his love for the Princess. These infringements are interpreted by the hypocritical court as signs of his madness.

The claustrophobic atmosphere Goethe creates by confining his Romantic character to a Classical play makes the work structurally a metaphor of its own theme. The translation catches the breathless spirit of Tasso's visionary soliloquies within a loose blank verse format and manages to contrast this language with the more regular and epigrammatic iambic pentameter of the courtly characters he opposes against. It is the tension between Classical

form and Romantic content that sustains the drama and sets it apart from the portraits of the artist in conflict with society so common in the subsequent German Romantic movement.

Ronald Taylor provides a kind of handbook to this movement in his selection, *Six German Romantic Tales*. All the varieties are here: magical, musical, political and aesthetic. He has selected Tieck's best, "Eckbert the Fair", along with the more typical but less satisfactory "Runenberg". Both are dark, supernatural fairytales which read at times like Freudian case histories as the narrators relate their doleful stories of guilt, dream, desire to murder, the death of parents and the loss of innocence. All this is set against the characteristic landscapes of mountain and forest solitude, ancient ruins, mysterious clefts, secret mines – in short, an early topography of the unconscious. The shifting perspective of the narrative and the pervasive sense of the conspiracy of events land them a schizophrenic quality not to be found again in German prose until Kafka.

Though formally well within the confines of the nineteenth-century "realist" narrative, Kleist's tales also seem quite modern with their blend of psychological and political insight. Kleist preferred real landscapes of catastrophe in which to set his tales of the fragility and arbitrary destructiveness of human existence. In this selection "The Earthquake in Chile", which miraculously saves and then brutally slaughters a pair of illicit lovers, is followed by

"The Betrothal on San Domingo", in which another pair of lovers perish pointlessly during the "Overture/Dessalines revolution" on French Hispaniola (now Haiti) in 1803.

The Hoffmann tales are a mixture of high aestheticism and genial irony, and complete the Romantic picture by demonstrating the movement's self-centred preoccupation with the figure of the artist and his privileged yet tortured perception. In "Don Giovanni" Hoffmann presents a pseudo-biographical encounter with an opera-singer who dies by identifying too deeply with her role. In "The Jewish Chapel in G" another artist perishes, who actually catches up with his utopian vision of St Catherine, only to find that once possessed he can no longer paint her.

In German Romanticism art always seems to be both a religion and a disease. As a result of his Italian Journey of 1786 during which Tasso was largely written, Goethe was able to temper his Romanticism with Classical form to produce an intensification (*Steigerung*) from these artistic polarities. Much of the Romanticism lag that followed in the nineteenth century was encumbered by an almost hypochondriacal concern with artistic sensibility. Perhaps this is what prompted Goethe in old age to make his over-prescriptive distinction to Eckermann. But these two excellent translations demonstrate clearly that it was in the neurotic restraint of the Romantic, rather than in the healthy restraint of the Classical, that the nineteenth-century German psychology found its models.

welcome. They are not in my opinion always right, or even always very clear. And I would have liked to see them sometimes admit that no confident answer to a question could be given, and content themselves with an exploration of the available indications. But they do provide us with a wealth of relevant considerations, that can hardly fail to be useful in further efforts to understand this fascinating material.

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# Homoeroticism on high

Marina Warner

JAMES M. SASLOW  
*Ganymede in the Renaissance*  
 265pp. Yale University Press. £25.  
 0301034237

The corruption of "Ganymede" gives "cata-mite", from Latin *cattinitus*, following the assumed fate of the beautiful boy whom Zeus, changing himself into an eagle, seized and carried up to Olympus, where he made him his cupbearer. Unlike other objects of the gods' passions, Ganymede survived the rape, was not changed into a flower or a cow, but was granted immortality in some stories; in others, set in the heavens forever as Aquarius, the water-carrier sign of the Zodiac. According to Virgil, Ganymede was partly to blame for Here's anger against the Trojans. Like Paris, he was a Phrygian youth, and while Paris, the more famous myth, roused her by giving Aphrodite the prize, Ganymede offended when he ousted Hebe, Hera's daughter, from Zeus' side at the Olympian symposium. For this sin, the goddess snatched the destruction of Troy. In *Pence*, Aristophanes made fun of Ganymede's ascension when he mounted his hero on the back of a dung-beetle for the voyage aloft. But this is a joke James M. Saslow, a solemn advocate of his theme, does not tell in *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homoeroticism in art and society*.

Saslow has traced the developments and variations of this comparatively minor figure from classical mythology in the thought of the humanists - Poliziano, Ficino, Castiglione, Aretino - and in the work of artists roughly between the end of the fifteenth century and the decline after the sack of Rome, or alternatively, between the statutes or decrees against sodomy promulgated in Florence in 1494 and 1542; and he has discerned a pattern - in his view, a decline - in the fortunes of Ganymede that reflects a corresponding deterioration of homosexuality's value and honour in society from the pre-Savonarola spring to the post-Tridentine winter. He sees Ganymede first exalted as a positive genie of homoerotic love at its plenitude, and then dwindling into an infantilized token of various noble families' dynastic ambitions, a kind of airborne as opposed to watery dauphin. The book is written with open partisanship. At one point, the author comments revealingly, in a passage on Aretino and the humanists, that "their concern to document homosexuality among the ancients was motivated in some measure by a desire to understand and dignify their own practices". His *Ganymede in the Renaissance* openly proceeds from similar motives, and he shapes the cupbearer's story into a founding myth of

homosexuality, or, more particularly, into an aetiological account of the origins of pederasty. In order to give identity, history, tribal continuity to gays today.

Other myths enrich the picture: the loves of Apollo for Hyacinthus and Cyparissus, Orpheus' rejection of women after the loss of Eurydice, and his death at the hands of enraged Maenads, dramatized by Poliziano and engraved by Dürer. But the person of Ganymede dominates. Saslow concentrates on the Michelangelo drawing (now known only in copies) made for his beloved Tommaso de' Cavalieri before 1533; the light and coquettish panel from Correggio's sequence on the loves of Jupiter; a magnificent Parmigianino drawing from a private collection showing Ganymede pouring nectar for the gods; and finally Rembrandt's yowling, peeing infant in the talons of the bird. Although Saslow manages to see the lust as a demigod fertilizing the earth, he generally offers allegorical explanations without conviction. His more enthusiastic response to iconography aligns him with contemporary pragmatists who have grown impatient with the mystification of the archons of the Wind-Panofsky school and vigorously advocate examination of the prima facie evidence of the image instead (the Venus of Urbino as

centrefold). Saslow invites us to recognize the sexual titillation of buttocks presented from the rear ("a terga") of various callipygian heroes, and then to see the pose as a representation of fantasy, not just dreamed, but enacted, and in some cases enacted without censure, guilt or self-disgust. He cannot rest at the evidence for homosexuality in intention and practice, but longs to make a case for its toleration, or even celebration in the golden days of humanist art and learning, to urge the pleasure and dignity of being Ganymede. His peroration claims: "Ganymede had known the highest honour and the greatest love of any mortal man".

Because his concern focuses on actual homosexual practice - sodomy - he does not linger on the crucial debate of the *Symposium*, re-invoked by the Neoplatonists, between physical and spiritual love of men for men, and passes over rather quickly the interesting allegorical exegeses of the myth. In late antiquity, Ganymede appeared on sarcophagi as a type of the soul caught up to heaven; Petrus Berchorius much later accepted the rape as a type of the innocent soul seized by the godhead, and the Neoplatonists hymned the episode as an allegory of the soul's transport through possession by love, seeing the rapist god, the raptor bird,

bringing rapture not rape. But Saslow is not keen on spiritual extrapolations; he does not investigate at all the relation between the eagle, bearer of Zeus' thunderbolts, and the vision of annihilating fate, and the consequent perception of humankind as playthings of the gods, of Ganymede as toy boy.

Neither in his pragmatic nor in his speculative mode does Saslow himself take wings; his text remains fast on the earth, grounded by a set of difficulties apparent even to the most sympathetic reader. Michelangelo, his most eloquent witness to the power of the Ganymede myth, showed the boy gripped agonists by the claws of the eagle, like a Christ nailed to the Cross; as Saslow admits, the Michelangelo gave him torment and simply cannot be adduced as evidence of homosexuality's unproblematic status in the Renaissance. Adrian Stokes wrote, in his essay on Michelangelo, "By and large art requires of unconsciousness that they be postulated. There has never been a more esoteric vehicle than the Greek myth".

Saslow crashes it on the wall of literal-minded reductionism. Yet, at the same time, he does not attempt to analyse certain primary aspects he never discriminates between Jove's sexuality in the story, and Ganymede's, but continues to ascribe homosexuality to both of them as well as to the putative beholder and sometimes to the maker of their image. Given the current bivalence of debate about the subject in art, its extraordinary that Saslow never discusses Ganymede's feelings in the matter, does not discriminate between consent and violation, and assumes that Ganymede represents the "passivity" and "receptivity" of the "feminine" partner in a homosexual relation. The efficacy of the beautiful love object does not lead him, in spite of his consciousness of contemporary concerns, to describe the differences - economic and political - that made girls occupy another, less accessible social space from boys. Most surprisingly, he draws a veil over the penis, unlike the artists whom he discusses. He quotes Leonardo's remark: "The act of procreation and the members employed therein are so repulsive, that if it were not for the beauty of the faces and the adornments of the actors and the pent-up impulse, nature would lose the human species", and he goes on to mention the artist's revealing complaint, that the penis is not subject to the control of will or intelligence. But he does not conclude that the king of the gods was godlike because he could act upon desires for forbidden ordinary mortals, that divinity also lies in an ideal, simple mastery over those desires, and that the story of Ganymede, like other myths about Olympian polymorphous perversity, tells us about human limitation rather than transcending social history.



Danilova Mazza's "Rape of Ganymede" reproduced from the book reviewed above.

## An illustrated summa

Charles Hope

GAIL L. GEIGER  
*Filippino Lippi's Carafa Chapel: Renaissance art in Rome*  
 208pp. Kirkville; MO. Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers. \$50.  
 0940474050

Filippino Lippi is a painter who fits uneasily into the conventional scheme of Florentine art history. Although he showed, in his contribution to the decoration of the Brancacci chapel, that he was entirely capable of working within the narrative conventions established by Masaccio, his later fresco cycles reveal a very different and more idiosyncratic approach, with agitated, often bizarre figures and highly fanciful architectural decoration. In these respects, and also in his concentration on the expressive play of drapery rather than the underlying anatomy of his figures, Filippino's ideas often seem different from those of his contemporaries and immediate successors. This is less evident in panel paintings, which show him at his best, than in two major cycles of frescoes, in the Strozzi chapel in Florence and in the slightly earlier chapel of Cardinal Oliviero Carafa in the Roman church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva. This second scheme is

unusual too in terms of the choice of themes, and innovative in the way in which they are arranged. Instead of the superimposed rows of sober narrative histories, usually devoted to the life of the Virgin or a single saint, which were favoured by Masaccio, Piero or Ghirlandajo, in the Carafa chapel one wall was filled with two unequal-sized and not immediately comprehensible stories of St Thomas Aquinas, another devoted to a representation of Virtues triumphing over Vices, and the third, behind an altarpiece of the Annunciation, to a vast fresco of the Assumption of the Virgin.

In 1510 Paolo Cortesi praised the decoration of the Carafa chapel, like that of the Sistine chapel, specifically for its erudite content, for "the clever choice of themes". Quite what he meant by this is by no means clear. Gail Geiger argues that the choice of subjects was very clever indeed, that the themes of the chapel's side walls relate to the general content respectively of Parts I and II of Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, while the paintings on the altar wall reflect Part III. Thus the scenes of St Thomas would represent God revealing himself to mortals, while the virtues would allude to the importance of living a virtuous life, and the altar wall to the Incarnation.

The analogy is certainly ingenious, but perhaps too generic to be compelling, especially as the unusual combination of subjects could

have been determined by more practical considerations. The chapel has a twin dedication in the names of Aquinas and the Virgin Annunciate, and it may once have been dedicated in the name of the Virgin of the Assumption. This alone would make the decision to decorate the altar wall with the Annunciation and the Assumption, and the west wall with stories of Aquinas, an obvious enough one; and the idea of putting Virtues on the east wall, which was broken by a window and by a door leading to a small tomb chamber, and was therefore unsuitable for narrative subjects, is equally understandable, especially if we remember the traditional association of Virtues and tomb decoration. It is possible, therefore, to see the basic choice of subjects as a sensible solution to the problem of filling the spaces with themes related to the chapel's dedication and function, a choice that could well have been made without reference to the *Summa*. And the inclusion of the Sibyls on the ceiling, who were certainly the focus of interest among Roman theologians at this period, may have been prompted by a wish to show more attractive figures than the traditional Evangelists or Doctors of the Church.

But if the choice of subjects was less learned than Professor Geiger would have us believe, why did Cortesi praise it as he did? The answer may lie in the fact that the significance of one scene in particular, "The Triumph of St Tho-

mas Aquinas", is conveyed by inscriptions in Latin, as indeed is the meaning of the wall frescoes in the Sistine chapel. Moreover, the Sibyls too hold inscriptions. These paintings, then, were not a Bible of the unlettered; but were meant to edify and give pleasure to educated people. As Geiger demonstrates, it is likely that a careful consideration of content extended even to the decorative details in the painted architectural framework and on the ceiling of the tomb chamber. This would certainly be consistent with what we know of the patron, whose piety was combined with an interest in theology and humanism.

Although Professor Geiger may have exaggerated the coherence and erudition of the programme, her book remains a carefully researched and well-argued study. She discusses every detail of the decoration, asks all the right questions and presents her conclusions clearly and without dogmatism. In particular, she is fully aware of the problem of assigning responsibility between painter and patron in a project of this kind, and certainly does not assume that Filippino was slavishly following in every detail a programme supplied by Carafa; she recognizes that works of art are created by artists.

Even though some of its conclusions are open to question, this well-written study is a significant contribution to our knowledge of Renaissance art in the late fifteenth century.

## Not entirely settled

L. M. Cullen

MICHAEL MACCARTHY-MORROGH  
*The Munster Plantation: English migration to southern Ireland 1583-1641*  
 318pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £27.50.  
 0198295256

The Munster Plantation in 1586-7, the first of the four major plantations in modern Irish history, came in the wake of the defeat of the Earl of Desmond in 1583. Well known in history because of its associations with Edmund Spenser and Sir Walter Raleigh, and because some early settlers flocked to and fro between England, Munster and America, it has been relatively little studied. Indeed, as Michael MacCarthy-Morrogh reminds us, it has been regarded as short-lived, swamped within a decade by the Irish rebellion again in 1598.

His admirable study provides a detailed account of the gestation and implementation of the project. It also makes a persuasive case for the long-term success of the Plantation by viewing it in the context of the following half-century, which culminated in yet another war engulfing the Plantation in 1641. *The Munster Plantation* is subtitled *English migration to southern Ireland 1583-1641*.

The plantation blueprint of "undertakers", that is, those undertaking to settle the lands, each in his separate seignory, creating a well-defined society of freeholders, farmers, copy-

holders and cottagers, reflects not only an ingrained sense of social hierarchy but a high ambition of reproducing an English society on seignories of some 12,000 acres. In the later Ulster Plantation, allotments on this scale were deliberately avoided, the upper limit being fixed at 2,000 acres, and this shift in policy is often quoted as official recognition of the failure of plantation in Munster. Dr MacCarthy-Morrogh reminds us, however, that while eleven seignories changed hands in 1598-1611, fifteen of the total of thirty-five seignories were still in 1641 unsold or undivided. Moreover, some of the undertakers selling out held land elsewhere in Munster, and some of the buyers were existing undertakers. In all, in 1641, the owners of twenty-six of the thirty-five seignories were resident in Ireland.

The difficulties that the undertakers faced are well set out in this book. Successful claims that some of the lands taken from the attainted rebels of 1583 were not theirs to be confiscated, either because they had been mortgaged or because rents had been abusively extracted from what were at law freeholds, reduced the confiscated area by a third, to 300,000 acres, by endless attrition in the law courts. The outcome was that the seignories were not only smaller than intended in the original blueprint, but were a fretwork of pieces of land enmeshed with other land rather than the compact estates originally envisaged.

Despite setbacks, however, the English population in the Munster Plantation rose from 4,000 in 1598 to 18,000 in 1641, sup-

plemented by perhaps another 4,000 scattered in coastal settlements or across north Cork, on non-plantation lands. Set out in these terms, the Plantation begins to look respectable even compared with the Ulster Plantation. Moreover, the failure to enforce the original plantation covenants by admitting of the accumulation of seignories led to the rise of powerful patrons of the colony within its own territories, and this was a source of strength, not the weakness or failure it is often said to be. In particular, Richard Boyle, one of the English officials in Ireland buying into the Plantation, acquired six seignories and part of four others. Significantly, in 1643 a compact region in county Cork had not been overrun by the rebels, illustrating the resilience of the colony. Moreover, town life burgeoned under the patronage of rich plantation owners, helped too by a shift southwards of the economic centre of gravity of Munster after the defeat of the Earl of Desmond. In 1622 one-quarter of the English population in the Plantation was town-based.

The Plantation's town life is in contrast with the feeble town development in the early Ulster Plantation. This in turn reflects a contrast in the economic background in both provinces. As MacCarthy-Morrogh is at pains to point out, rents were higher in Munster, leases shorter, and no indulgent tenurial customs emerged. Indeed, he underestimates the underlying strength of the Munster economy by his repeated emphasis on the famine of 1582 as a catalyst of the plantation project. The famine evidence, however, comes from two officials, Wallop and Browne, making the case for plantation. Parallels recur in the 1650s for similar special pleading, and famine on the scale suggested in this book would require much more telling evidence and a critical assessment of it.

The economic success of the Plantation would appear to depend in some measure both

## Reformed and resilient

Helko A. Oberman

MENNA PRESTWICH (Editor)  
*International Calvinism 1541-1715*  
 403pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.  
 0198219334

One single volume, and even an impressive number of solid contributions, cannot in one stroke remedy the state of confusion in the once famous field of the study of Calvinism. Three formidable obstacles block the historian's advance. First of all, as was revealed by the "celebrations" of the tercentenary of the 1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, no single contemporary scholar commands sources which cover a sufficient chronological and geographical expanse to be in a position to reconstruct the lines of change and continuity exhibited by Calvinism as it sojourned through Europe and the New World. Even more disconcerting than the piles of sources is the modern tendency to write "plausible history", which means in this case that Calvin's impact tends to be explained in terms of either economic need or of political gain. This does not leave much chance to fathom the mentality of those refugees who persevered under duress and persecution long before they could settle down and, for a time, seize political control.

The third obstacle is, ironically, a consequence of the very best research in the field: previously clear categories, such as "Puritanism", have in the course of incessant revisionism lost much of their profile. Each contributor to *International Calvinism 1541-1715*, edited by Menna Prestwich, has a personal vocabulary, but all of them fight a losing battle in differentiating between "Huguenots", "Evangelicals", "strict Calvinists" and "Puritans" - to mention only the chief designations.

Henry J. Cohn tries to achieve some measure of clarity by placing his treatment of Calvinism in Germany under the heading of "The Second Reformation" - which he regards as a "long-established" and hence (?) valid usage of the term. Yet the most insistent call for a "second" Reformation or "emanation" was voiced by German pietists after the first wave of enthusiastic Lutheranism had begun to ebb, though influenced by Geneva, this fascinating movement cannot be so easily identified with Calvinism. And turning our attention to the "second" Reformation, we find that the early sixteenth-century city of Reformation which has the first and, in so far as the most valid claim to represent - after Luther - the second Reformation.

Some measure of cohesion would have been achieved if the opening chapter on Calvin's theology, by the late Richard Stauffer, had been circulated in advance and used as a standard for measuring the changing facets of Calvinism. Yet for that purpose the elements historically most crucial - such as discipline, polity and politics - did not receive sufficient space in Stauffer's sketch.

Nevertheless, the volume provides a significant and in part most valuable guide for recapturing the history and character of Calvinism. In eleven essays the several phases and stages are presented: Geneva in the time of Calvin and Beza (Gillian Lewis), France 1559-1629 (a lucid essay by the editor herself), the Netherlands (Alastair Duke), Germany (Henry J. Cohn), East Central Europe (R. J. W. Evans), England (Patrick Collinson), Scotland 1559-1638 (Michael Lynch), Colonial North America 1630-1715 (W. A. Speck and L. Billington), France 1598-1685 (Elizabeth Labrousse), French Calvinist political thought 1534-1715 (Myriam Yardeni) and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (Philippe Joutard). The concluding chapter by Herbert Lüthy on the apparently inevitable Weber thesis (on Calvinism and capitalism) dares to present an almost Anglo-Saxon and quite delightful after-dinner speech, full of puns, sober wisdom and surprising *non sequiturs*. Unfortunately, his well-founded plea to bury or at least drop the Weber thesis is unlikely to be heeded, in view of the ideological climate of modern debate.

*International Calvinism's* central focus, appropriately enough, is on Calvinism in France and, within that area, on the theme of the *Refuge* - a subject beautifully illustrated on the book's jacket by an engraving by Jan Luyken, now in the Rijksmuseum, portraying the 1685 flight of the Huguenots from France. Yet not 1685 but 1715 has been chosen as the concluding date, and with good reason: in that year on August 25, in a village of the lower Cévennes, a young man gathered a dozen friends to reconstitute a Reformed Church - only weeks before Louis XIV died, Joutard uses this seemingly insignificant event to suggest a fresh interpretation of the impact of the Revocation: the renewal - not the extinction - of French Protestantism.

This perspective reminds us of a singular virtue which graces the entire volume. A theme easily distorted by religious resentment and confessionalism is presented here with an impressively cool, analytical balance. This fine collection of studies, with helpful bibliographies for further reading, is an attractive publication.

## Fleets and freighters

G. V. Scammell

RICHARD NATKIEL and ANTONY PRESTON  
*The Weddell Atlas of Maritime History*  
 256pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £16.95.  
 0297786539

The history of the sea has not, despite recent French-inspired interest, attracted anything like the volume and variety of investigation devoted to things terrestrial. We know much about battles, wars and admirals. We know a good deal about trade and the vessels in which it was conducted, next to nothing about fisheries and seamen and far more about Europe and North America than the rest of the world. This imbalance and some difficulties of their own making beset Richard Natkiel and Antony Preston, the authors of this useful book, *The Weddell Atlas of Maritime History*. Their intention is to "provide a reference source on naval battles, the great explorations and the evolving patterns of trade and commerce". Much of this they accomplish admirably. A huge slice of history, from the days of the Phoenicians to the rise of the naval power of the Soviet Union and the recent and much debated Falklands campaign is covered. The maps and charts are consistently clear and instantly comprehensible. The illustrations for the modern period are excellent and the comments on naval developments and warfare of the past century particularly shrewd and illuminating.

In such an ambitious undertaking some lapses and errors are inevitable. Milecca was not established by the Portuguese - it was one of Asia's richest and most celebrated entrepôts when they arrived - nor is it in the Spice Islands. Francis Drake did not open a new route into the Pacific but followed that pioneered by Magellan. The enormous loot harvested by the Spaniards in Peru, far from "undermining their expansionist energies", sent them in hot pursuit of further Eldorados in Chile, the jungles of Amazonia and the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. And Spain's world empire, whatever its subsequent misfortunes, did not fall into the hands of the English and the Dutch. Some lapses, such as Sweden's

on the survival of a strong local society and on a quickening of the pulse of trade on both sides of local society. Moreover, the author himself makes a concession whose significance he does not seem fully to appreciate: soldiers already serving in Ireland were an important component of the settlement, and evidence of sustained immigration becomes thin after the 1610s.

Paradoxically, although administrators tended to see civility as dependent on tillage, it was the strength of pastoral farming which sustained the colonists' economy, as the book shows very clearly. But MacCarthy-Morrogh seems to overargue his case that a composite settler-native society was in the early stages of emerging; the evidence of intermarriage, a knowledge of Irish by some settlers and an acquiescence in shared roles in political and municipal life, hardly seems compelling. What cannot be doubted, however, is that the strong resident basis in the Munster Plantation created a real strength in the settlement which his book has brought out very convincingly.

Munster politicians became disproportionately important in the eighteenth-century Irish parliament. Whether their strongly Protestant and aggressive attitudes date from before the 1641 rebellion is in doubt, especially if we accept MacCarthy-Morrogh's picture of a rather complacent pre-1641 society. But the large share of the famous 1641 Depositions of suffering loyalists taken up with the woes of Munster settlers reflects the solid economic base they held, and though Ulster loyalists in fact suffered more, it was Munster politicians who turned the 1641 Massacres into a political catch-phrase in the eighteenth century.

Dr MacCarthy-Morrogh's book is not only a thorough study of the Munster Plantation, but raises directly and indirectly a large number of issues central to the study of the implantation and character of colonial society in Ireland.

military hegemony in the north in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, are hardly maritime. Nor does there seem any reason why the Armada campaign should come after the rise of Dutch sea power in the seventeenth century, or the Anglo-Dutch wars of the days of Oliver Cromwell and Charles II after a sketch of the slave trade, which was still flourishing in the 1800s.

More serious is the lack of balance in the book. It is much concerned with naval battles, campaigns and fleet actions, and nearly half its length is devoted to the naval side of the First and Second World Wars. But it takes, for example, no account of fisheries (other than whaling), which already in the fifteenth century were bringing Europeans to the north-east coast of America and which are now worked, almost the world over, by Soviet-bloc fleets. There is no indication of the patterns of winds and currents, which for centuries determined the movements of sailing-ships. Little is said about the astonishing evolution, with the triumph of the steamer in the nineteenth century, of that global network of liner routes which has only recently disintegrated. The growth of flags of convenience is omitted. Shipbuilding is largely ignored, as are the ancient indigenous trades of the eastern seas and the coal trade, which at the end of the eighteenth century gave employment, merely in supplying London, to a quarter of Britain's tonnage.

It would also have enhanced the value of the book if, particularly in the earlier sections, the authors had been more forthcoming in explanation and interpretation. The nature and organization of the medieval commerce of the Mediterranean are scarcely comprehensible without some indication of the significance of spices, and without some consideration of the emergence of the unique state-built and state-owned Venetian merchant fleet. Similarly the reader is left to guess why the Portuguese should have been at such pains to open a long and arduous maritime route to Asia or why in more recent times men have so assiduously hunted the whale. In short, admirable though this book is for those interested in modern naval history, it is not a comprehensive atlas of the history of the sea.



## Franchise and fair wages

James Brow

DAVID LUDDEN  
Peasant History in South India  
310pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.  
£32.20.  
0691 076863  
MARSHALL M. BOUTON  
Agrarian Radicalism in South India  
327pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.  
£30.20.  
0691 076863  
MICK MOORE  
The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka  
328pp. Cambridge University Press. £30.  
0521 265509

David Ludden's account of the Tirunelveli region of South India argues eloquently on the side of those who recognize that peasants, no less than others, play an active part in the making of their own histories. By covering the thousand years from 900 to 1900 AD, while confining himself to what is now a single administrative district in the state of Tamil Nadu, he is able to show how the ground and the movements of the larger social order, however unevenly, always emerged from the strivings of specific peasant groups. *Peasant History in South India* is no more a history of individual peasants than it is of dynastic fortunes or religious beliefs, although both the latter figure in it. Rather, it is the story of how collectivities of peasants – castes, villages and political groups – through their incessant struggles with nature, one another and outsiders, continually reshaped the land that sustained them, the social orders they inhabited and the cultural worlds that gave meaning to their lives.

From about 900 to 1300 AD, as peasants laboured to bring under firmer control the water supply necessary for paddy cultivation, villages forged links with one another and with local chiefs, kings and especially temples, in complex redistributive networks of gifts and tribute. This agrarian order was disrupted after 1300 as increasing numbers of warriors and peasants moved into Tirunelveli from the north. Groups of Shanars, Maravars and Vadigas expanded the agricultural frontier by settling away from the central Tambraparni river on poorly watered land that needed the construction of reservoirs and wells to be made productive. After two centuries of turmoil a new political order began to emerge, dominated by warrior rulers who exacted tribute in return for their protection. Agricultural diversity and state coercion made for the development of trade and market exchange, in which foreign as well as local merchants began to participate. The British East India Company, and the imperial regime that succeeded it, thus entered into a historical process whose subsequent direction they certainly influenced, but the main trajectory of which was already set by centuries of indigenous activity. Ludden sees the rapid expansion of agricultural commodity production in the nineteenth century less as the result of a shock imposed by imperialism and the industrial revolution than as a development of very long-term trends in peasant social and cultural history. This conclusion is a welcome remedy to Eurocentric accounts of capitalist expansion into India; it emerges from a compelling narrative that is grounded in meticulous scholarship.

Marshall M. Bouton's *Agrarian Radicalism in South India* is also a study of a single district in Tamil Nadu, but its scope and aims are very different. Focusing on events in Thanjavur District between 1960 and 1972, it seeks to advance theoretical understanding of the sources of agrarian radicalism. Bouton assembles a vast array of data and subjects them to a detailed statistical analysis in which agrarian radicalism, taken as the dependent variable, is explained in relation to a number of independent variables, including geographical and demographic characteristics, agro-economic structure, technological change in agriculture, and the level of socio-economic development. Peasant action (in this case, radicalism) thus only appears here as a response to certain features of the social and natural environment. Moreover, having defined radicalism as "an organisation of action that is extreme, with re-

spect to either means or ends", Bouton's decision to measure it in terms of Communist party strength in local elections not only diverts attention from the sources of radicalism towards its mobilization by organizations based outside the peasantry, but also prevents us from seeing how radicalism is generated in the everyday experience of poverty and oppression.

Bouton's strongest finding is that agrarian radicalism in Thanjavur was concentrated in the eastern parts of the district where the class structure was sharply polarized between a small and socially homogeneous group of large landowners and an equally homogeneous but largely landless and impoverished labour force. From the discovery of this unsurprising correlation, which was pointed out by André Bételle in 1972, Bouton goes on to question the importance that others have attached to capitalism and imperialism as causes of agrarian radicalism. He argues that the impact of the market, the State and other forces of "modernization" is always mediated by agrarian structures that are locally variable, and that these variations are primarily the result of adaptations to different ecological conditions.

The first of these points is well demonstrated, but the second is simply asserted, and is not really borne out by the history of agrarian change that Bouton gives. Outbreaks of agrarian unrest in eastern Thanjavur in the late 1960s, which at the time raised the prospect that the Green Revolution might lead to a Red one, followed twenty years of structural change in agrarian relations. As Bouton clearly demonstrates, this change was the product of local class struggles that were themselves significantly affected by external factors. He shows, for example, that the landlords' shift from the use of share-cropping tenants and attached labourers to the employment of daily wage labourers was a response both to earlier unrest and to attempts by the State to regulate the conditions of tenancy and wage labour. In the 1940s, the threat of land reform persuaded many landlords to evict their tenants and employ wage labourers in their place, which resulted in class relations becoming even more polarized. Then, in the 1960s, technological

## Changing faces

D. F. Pocock

A. DAVID NAPIER  
Masks, Transformation, and Paradox  
282pp. University of California Press. £33.95.  
0520 045327

*Masks, Transformation and Paradox* reminded me of a game we once played one wet Sunday afternoon with a couple of cheap and simple masks discarded by the children after Guy Fawkes' night. As we passed them from person to person, little dramas spontaneously emerged, monologues and dialogues, funny and sad, around which all of us unreflecting discovered our own roles and words. There was a surprising revelation of histrionic ability in people who never before, or later, showed any such skill or even interest: the transformation of a young and extrovert Australian into an enigmatically sad old woman, for example. No less fascinating was the transformation of the masks themselves as they seemed each time appropriate to the varying characters that they, somehow, facilitated. This experience of illusion and paradox, of a peculiar relation between appearance and reality, is part of A. David Napier's preoccupation and to it he joins the fact that masks are and have been widely associated with the management of change in individuals and groups, with the great rites of passage of birth and death, with initiations and rituals of curing.

To will change, to recognize its possibility, is to have the capacity for illusion and paradox because we conceive of a state of affairs which is not, and indeed may never be. This, in turn, is related to our conception of what identity is: what, when we say, "He is a man", we intend by the word "is", because the capacity to recognize, or wish for, or expect change rests on our identification of whatever it is that changes. One could powerfully theorize of the person as

innovations allowed double-cropping where it had previously been impossible, thereby increasing the demand for labour, albeit only at specific times during the agricultural cycle. This strengthened the bargaining power of the labourers, whose tactics were influenced by representatives of political parties that were concerned with the conditions of labour in Thanjavur, but also with their struggles at the state and national levels. Clearly, more has been involved than simply adaptation to local ecological conditions. Bouton excludes from his correlational analysis the recognition, implicit in his material, that the agrarian structures that condition peasant action are themselves, to a significant degree, the product of previous peasant struggles. Other than this, his interpretation of these events is prudent and precise.

Mick Moore does not doubt the peasantry's ability to shape its own destiny, but he also recognizes that it does not always act to advance what he calls its objective interests. His account in *The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka* is an attempt to determine why Sri Lankan farmers, who have regularly played a major role in replacing governments at general elections, have not asserted a class interest in national politics by demanding agrarian policies, such as high farm output prices, that would directly enhance their material welfare. His attempt to answer this question by analysing the particular combination of factors that have shaped Sri Lanka's recent agrarian history is both resolute and rigorous.

In the first place, Moore shows that peasants do not constitute a homogeneous class with uniform interests. Many of those recorded in censuses and surveys as smallholders, or who describe themselves as farmers, in fact depend heavily either on income from non-agricultural sources or on their wages as agricultural labourers. Second, he demonstrates that the political mobilization of peasants has been achieved mainly by an appeal to collective identities other than class, such as religion, ethnicity and caste. Moreover, although the franchise has been universal since 1931, peasants were slow to raise their voices in the electoral arena, and when they did so they

found a stable pattern of party competition already established. Third, Moore argues that the development of peasant political consciousness has been significantly influenced by government policies which have been relatively generous to peasants in the distribution of State lands and the revenue taxed from plantation agriculture, and which have not imposed on them any burden that was widely felt to be unjustly oppressive.

This last point is crucial. The combination of a colonial legacy that left large tracts of land in the hands of the State, a commitment to provide extensive welfare services, and close regulation of the economy, has enabled governments since independence to assume the role of the great provider. Peasants, along with others, have therefore looked to the State as the source of all kinds of benefits – not just of land, but also of jobs, subsidies, licences, housing, farm inputs, health and educational services, and so on. As the distribution of such resources was taken over by the local representatives of whichever party was in power, so political activity at the local level concentrated on the manipulation of party connections to gain privileged access to these benefits. So peasants have not been persuaded that the most effective way to advance their individual interests is to mobilize in pursuit of their collective interests as a class. Although the resources controlled by the State have been proportionally very large, they have also always been inadequate to meet the demand for them. Peasants have therefore been disposed to see one another as competitors, and as long as the prospect of an electoral transfer of power between the parties has been realistic, peasants have been aligned against one another as the clients of contending local patrons and supporters of opposed parties.

Although Moore concentrates on a single issue, his far-ranging exploration of it encompasses virtually all the most important aspects of contemporary Sri Lankan society, including the ethnic conflict that is now threatening to consume it. The work as a whole provides a comprehensive view of recent Sri Lankan history, as seen from the standpoint of peasant politics.

Western society is encapsulated in the saying, "the leopard cannot change its spots", and when we hear that, in another society, men have confessed to changing into leopards, we judge them to be deluded; in fact they are working with a different theory.

Masks are associated with change and are paradoxical objects. Hanging on a peg they may, like those Guy Fawkes masks, "say" nothing or they may be clear visual statements susceptible of iconological exegesis; but what they will mean, what they will do, what they will become when they are worn is not predictable. The mask is at once rigid and flexible: the masked drama of ancient Greece was not a parade of stereotypes but, rather, Dr Napier suggests, it was the interaction of the eidolon with the events and the sequence of events that produced the powerful effect. That is the context of Napier's study, and in establishing it he has many illuminating and provocative things to say about the nature of drama, the concept of the person, and the history of Western thought, although, like so many anthropologists, he is less informed and sensitive about the Christian tradition than he is about others.

Within this context the main emphasis of the book falls on the history, distribution and significance of the fearful petrifying mask. Napier studies first the best-known Western example, the Gorgon Medusa, and from this study develops an anguished and exciting investigation which carries him to the Middle East, India and finally Bali. One line only of this adventurous but rigorous work of detection takes us from the spots on the brow of the Medusa to the significance of the Third Eye, via the supercilious tufts of a lion's head, the goddess Kali and the sectarian marks worn on the brow by sectarian devotees in India. The reader must be prepared, however, for regular digressions as the author conducts necessary supportive investigations into, for example, intoxicants and androgyny. This brutally brief

account runs the risk of suggesting that we have yet another of those popular studies of religion and myth that move through the casual association of ideas and similarities to portentous equations; anyone looking for that here will not survive two pages of Napier's meticulous assessment of the evidence.

In a final chapter there is a remarkable suggestion that the demonic faces which have been studied in previous chapters are grounded in an "autonomous archetypal image". As Rodney Needham observes in his foreword, this concern with the "primary factors in the determination of human experience" sets Napier's work apart from the archaeology of ideas. I do not propose to reveal the details here for fear of depriving readers of the sudden exhilaration produced by the mind at that stage of the argument by the unexpected shift to an area of evidence not previously touched upon.

The book is not written or priced for the general market but it would be a shame if choreographers, psychotherapists, producers of drama, theologians and anyone whose practice lies in the meditation of appearance and reality, were put off by these considerations. I will not pretend that it is an easy read; Napier writes compactly and sometimes elliptically and occasionally indulges in academic precisiosity. The reader must be prepared for such statements as, "Now Phrygian, as is well known, is . . . an Indo-European language."

Despite Professor Needham's explicit directive to the contrary, I would recommend general readers not to be over-respectful of the author's chosen plan of presentation but to take Needham's foreword as an introduction, and then to read Chapters Four and Five in order to follow Dr Napier at work and to see just what sort of beast it is that he is hunting. They would then get more out of the more meditative, context-establishing Chapters One, Two and Three; but let them reserve the last chapter until last.

## A breath of hedonism

Jonathan Keates

JAMES MONEY  
Capri: Island of pleasure  
332pp. Hamish Hamilton. £14.95.  
0241 1747X

"All the inhabitants here obside the terminations and mangle moreover; for Capri they say Capri", the twenty-three-year-old Gladstone must have been one of the few visitors to the siren isle who remained impervious to its charm, deterred as he was by a rascally boatman, a smirking friar and seasickness in the Blue Grotto. Otherwise the notorious allure – something, apparently, to do with the volatile constituents of *l'aria caprese* – has been remarkably successful. Even Lenin, however contemptuous of the intellectual climate, was not wholly aloof, though he felt bound to prefer the Volga's elemental simplicities to the theatricality of the Grotto and its surroundings.

Ironically enough, Lenin's monument (the island's only public commemoration of a distinguished visitor) stands in the gardens of the Villa Krupp, the gift of the adipose German pederast whose sea-saw armaments dealings may be held indirectly to have hastened Bolshevik ascendancy. Fritz Krupp was neither the first nor the last of those who, in discovering Capri, laid bare the extent of their own ambigulities.

Therius, the ruins of whose pleasure-dome are now crowned by an admonitory statue of the Madonna, may rank as the local tutelary spirit of irregular mores, but Capri's heyday as a haven of sexual unorthodoxy arrived at the turn of the present century. The Wolcott-Perry "Sisters", Ladies of Llangollen transported to the Marina Grande, were a case in point. Wealthy cousins from Iowa, their hyphenated surnames a pledge of eternal union, they brought the leathery imperturbability of the Middle West to the business of dispensing *édouls* and *crème-de-menthe frappée* to Sunday tea-guests, squabbling with recalcitrant churchwardens and shifty Neapolitan advocates, and casting an indiscriminate mantle of coquetry and partisanship over whatever birds of passage caught their fancy.

Of these the most exotic, if in some ways also the most pathetic, was Count Jacques Fersen-Adelsward, whose precipitate departure from Paris in the autumn of 1902, following charges of indecent exposure to debauchery, led him to try the same thing in Capri, enhanced by opium addiction amid the *folles de grandeur* of

a Louis Seize villa. The limited indulgence of the expatriate community was taxed still further by the Count's humourlessness, vanity and histrionic self-absorption. Typically, however, "dear Count Jack" and his henchman, Nino Cesarini, a building labourer whose attributes were commemorated in a life-size bronze nude perched on a triton shell in the villa garden, became not merely a fixture of island life but emblematic of its singularities.

What these were, in the wider context of European cultural history, emerges with dispassionate clarity from James Money's history, a sensitive but level-headed attempt to encapsulate Capri's fascinations for the English reader. His detailed accounts of everything from pension prices at the Hotel Quisisana and Axel Munthe's bird-sanctuary to Gracie Fields' funeral, far from being annals of the parish, underline the necessity of Capri as a vision of untrammelled hedonism, challenging every cherished notion of purity, hierarchy and decorum.

Thus, along with the more predictable appearances by E. F. Benson, Norman Douglas, Somerset Maugham and Romaine Brooks, the place simultaneously contained Rilke – "always I grow melancholy in such beauty-spots as these, faced with this obvious, praise-ridden, incontestable loveliness"; Gorki, who painted his house red and subjected his guest Chaliapin to a "people's tribunal" for having knelt before the Tsar at a performance of *Boris Godunov*; and Rose O'Neill, hard-drinking inventor of the Kewpie Doll.

At times the precision of Money's chronicle makes us feel the physical pokiness of Capri (3½ miles long by 1¼ wide) and verges on the soap-opera. This week Gwen Galata puts chastity-belts on her dogs and Nino is ceremonially flogged in a Mithraic ritual at Matermania; next week Thomas Jerome dies of a gastric haemorrhage and Emelle Frazer goes bathing in her hat and gloves. These anecdotes are an intrinsic source of pleasure in a work which is amply and seriously researched. As to the native Capresi, saturnine and hermetic in the best traditions of the Italian south, Money is, rightly, respectful rather than adoring. His prospect of the island, after a century's intensive tourism, is no more encouraging than that of Conrad in 1905, who wrote "All this is a sort of blue nightmare traversed by stinks and perfumes, full of flat roofs, vineyards, vaulted passages, enormous rocks, pergolas, with a mad gallop of German tourists *lâchés à travers tout cela* . . . where the Lager beer bottles go pop. It is a nightmare with the fear of the future throwo in."

told, "never hit their children").

There are two forms of ethnocentrism dominant in the world. The first treats other cultures as so essentially different as to make all understanding impossible. The second – that of the soft sociological television programme – assumes that at the deepest level everyone must be just like us. It is this latter world view that leads Schwartz to plunge into human contact: weddings, the rites of shared food, the sadness of death are portrayed as universals in which every man must share. It is perhaps this that lends the book its touching innocence. For here, people are surprisingly generous and friendly to the white-faced dossier – extending hospitality and refusing payment in the name of that universal kinship of man with man. Sometimes in the course of this intercontinental gallop one yearns for a "buddle" – but there are none. For Schwartz, only governments are evil. So Idi Amin is the only character in a black hat, his followers being treated with a baffled vagueness. One suspects that the problem arises because Uganda is the only place where Schwartz spent any real time, and got beneath the surface of smiling social contact by trying to get a job done. Elsewhere, he floats on a credit-card of independence where travel has become an end in itself, preventing joy in actually being anywhere.

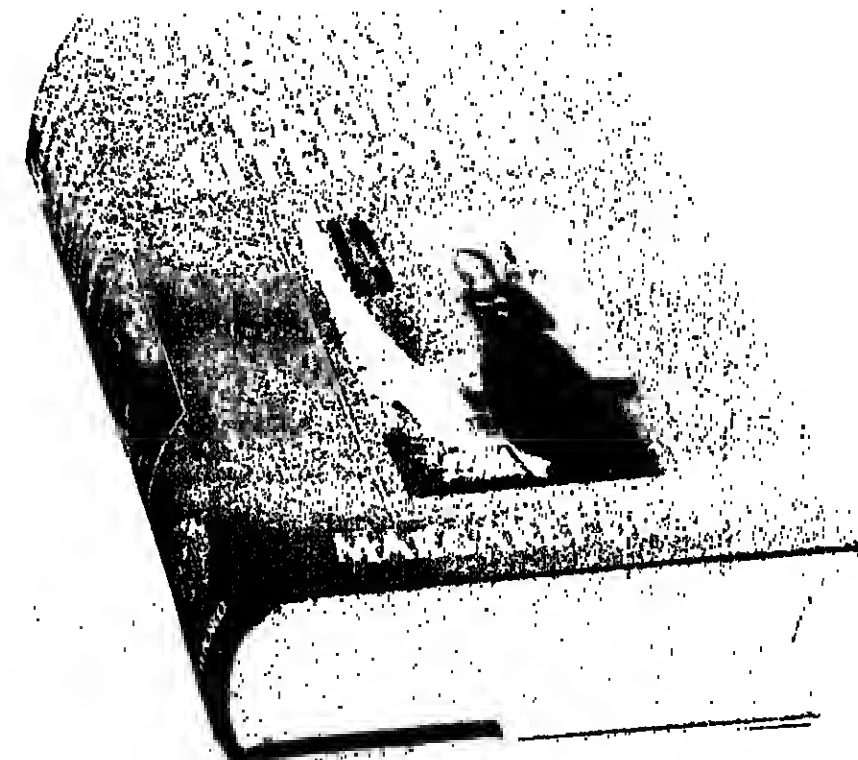
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# Helping out

## Joanna Motion

ROSEMARY SUTCLIFF  
Flame-Coloured Taffeta  
120pp. Oxford University Press. £6.95.  
0 19 271490 2

Damaris Crocker has a good old Puritan name but is a romantic at heart. When she sees chalk crosses on the stable door and hears a sailor-fiddler playing "Spanish Ladies" up and down the lanes she lights up to the knowledge that it is a night for the Fair Traders. And when, next day, she finds a young man badly wounded from a run-in with the Customs House men she claims him as her smuggler and embarks on the excitement of getting him well and away.

*Flame-Coloured Taffeta* is set in an area that will be familiar to regular readers of Rosemary Sutcliff: in the shadow of the Sussex Downs, between Chichester and the sea; but the period is, by her standards, a comparatively modern one. When Damaris is not reading *The Gentleman's Magazine* to her fat and kindly Aunt Selina she is trying the lately published *Pamela*; with her elderflower wine Aunt Selina tastes the king over the water; when the story begins it is five years since Honnie Prince Charlie took and humbled his chance at the throne.

Damaris's wounded man, it becomes evident, is neither smuggler nor French spy (in relief to her, that) but a courier for the lost cause of the Jacobite court. Yet twelve-year-old Damaris and her level-headed friend Peter, who is more at home in the lambing sheds of Damaris's farm than doing extra Latin with his father the vicar, are less concerned with the rights and wrongs of wounded Tom Wildgoose's business than with the need to protect a hurt creature – and with the adventure of it. They go for help to the village Wise Woman, Gently Small, half a witch, entirely a healer; a reliable ally not so much because she is *ogham* that universal enemy the Excise as because she is *for* people: "people and animals and the words", as Damaris recognizes.

The natural world lies close to the surface of the novel. Sutcliff writes with her customary

illuminating sympathy for the landscape and its creatures.

Out of this comes a strong underlying sense that country ways are good ways – that people who can't tell an oyster-catcher's call from a coaching horn are missing out; and that townies, who leave gates open and go hunting in outlandish yellow coats with lace trimming, are not only out of sympathy with the place but inherently suspect – probably on the side of the Excise, indeed. This is a sunny and gentle novel but Sutcliff is too interesting a writer to suppress the perception that there are grim things under the sun: pistol shots and wax hearts with thorns in them and hangings at Chichester. Without that menace, half the exhilaration of the chase and the rescue would be gone, and Sutcliff is as adept as ever at unrolling a narrative with incidents of high excitement: Damaris, Tom Wildgoose and a half-tamed fox hunted by hounds; a midnight rescue of Tom aided by magic that if not black is distinctly dark; escape through woods on the night of a smugglers' run.

*Flame-Coloured Taffeta* is a self-contained, good-hearted adventure story where the adventures are better than the slightly flabby excuse provided for them by the fading Jacobite cause – even Tom Wildgoose is likewise under the value of his mission. The two central characters, Damaris and Peter, are likeable, capable children evidently destined for a companionable marriage when they grow up, occasionally irradiated, perhaps, by Damaris's yearning imagination. She is a girl who is prepared to sacrifice her cotton underskirts for bandages, though she dreams of a petticoat in flame-coloured taffeta, "which somehow stood for all the joy and laughter and beauty and shine of the world".

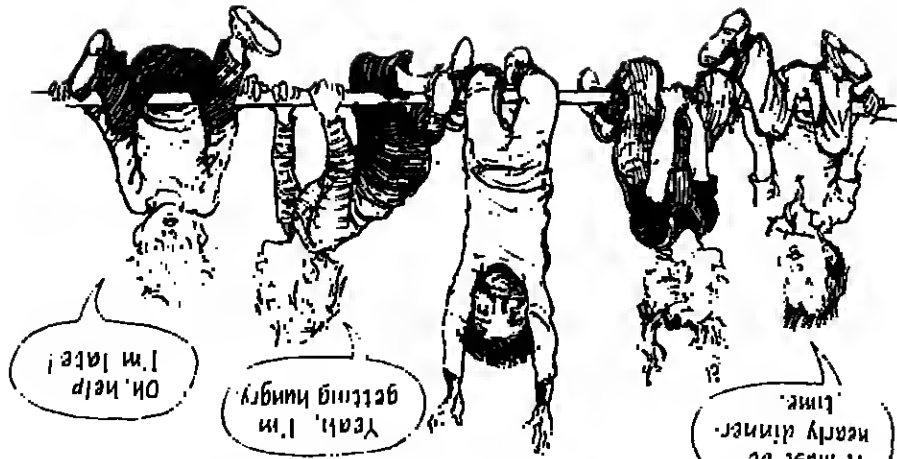
It is not a book that aims at the profundity or the scope of Rosemary Sutcliff's celebrated Roman novels. But it succeeds as an enjoyable, soundly-crafted short novel where no whisker of plot or detail of character is wasted. And the sense of history under the lanes, the past seeped into the landscape, as Damaris looks out to sea from her farm house built of wrecked Armada timbers, will be familiar and satisfying to Sutcliff's many admirers.

their bottle and Tom bunks off school and squashes dead mice against his teacher's skirt. They are ordinary people getting by in difficult circumstances and if the flower in the vase sometimes come from the graveyard, the dead won't notice.

Although the book is divided into short stories, it is best read as a continuous narrative because the characters gain in depth and interest with each adventure. Cameraderie binds the stories together. When Tom can't play in the cricket team without the proper clothes and Gran can't afford any, they get a huge yellowed Oxford pair of trousers and Gran's old friend sorts them out, even though the whiteness takes the paint off her bath. The message is community, a spirit of sharing made increasingly difficult not only by lack of funds or unemployment but by the planning that breaks up the familiar streets replacing them with tower blocks, the concrete giants the social worker thinks Gran should prefer.

One drawback to these stories, refreshing as they are, is their emphasis on Tom. It is he who has the adventures and looks after his sister, who dreams of going to university and making something of his life and Maggie has no imaginative life to compensate for her restricted options. As a child, I always chose boy's books from the library because they were more exciting but, nowadays it is not enough for girls to live vicariously. Despite the appearance in the book of a woman cricketer, Bernadette Dooley, lively girls reading *Tom and Maggie* will feel as cheated as an older generation did when Julian and Dick went out with their flashlights leaving George and Anne to guard the tent.

The Puffin Readathon, a national sponsored reading week in schools and bookshops for children, in aid of the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund will take place from October 4 to 11. Further details are available from Puffin publicity, 27 Wrights Lane, London W8 9TZ.



"It was when they were hanging upside-down on the bars that Chips suddenly remembered the time." In the second book of adventures of Chips and his best friend Jessie, *Another Helping of Chips* (64pp. Bodley Head £5.50, 0 370 30701 8), Shirley Hughes illustrates the potential for mayhem inherent in spring cleaning, dishing, ghosts and evil singing. Incentives to read are also provided in the mixture of solid text and strip cartoon.

## Following on

### Sarah Hayes

JANE LESLIE CONLY  
Racco and the Rats of NIMH  
189pp. Gollancz. £6.95.  
0 575 03261 8

In 1971 Robert C. O'Brien wrote a story about a group of intelligent rats and a family of field-mice. Now, almost a generation later, his daughter has produced a sequel to *Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. It is a brave and dutiful attempt. The ingredients are right; medium and message are properly balanced; the subject matter has been carefully brought up to date with the introduction of computer discs and disco-rats. What is missing is the presence of the storyteller – his sense of timing and place.

Both novels begin with the Frisby family. Once again it is young Timothy Frisby who is in trouble, this time wounded on his way to school. Other characters from the first story – the owl, Jeremy the crow, and Mr Ages, the old mouse – make cameo appearances, reminding the reader of their dramatic roles in the original. A new character appears: street-wise Racco, who lies and boasts and sings snatches of pop-songs while munching chocolate bars. Then the rats learn that Thorn Valley, their sanctuary, is to be flooded to create a leisure park. They plan to reprogramme the computers so that the dam will destroy itself, but time is against them. Eventually the flooding is brought to a halt by Racco's father, the evil Jenner, who crawls out of retirement to gnaw through the cable and electrocutes himself.

There is no doubting the story's message: it comes through loud and clear. Whole grain is right; country ways are right; community spirit is right – technology is wrong; ambition is wrong; discos are wrong; chocolate is wrong; fun is wrong. Everything about the egregious Racco is wrong, for his creator is an old-fashioned moralist. Where *Mrs Frisby* asked questions but did not provide answers, its sequel gives answers but provokes no questions. Racco's encounters with wise old Nicodemus owe more to the heavy moralizing of *Little Men* than the gentle blandishments of *Mrs Frisby*.

Only once, in the reappearance of Jenner, is there a glimpse of the original fire, a flash of real excitement. But here, as elsewhere, the author misses her chance, for all we have of Jenner is a shadowy presence and a charred body. Far too often the important action seems to happen off-stage, with Racco's silly pranks taking the limelight. The idea of rats as intelligent as people has great possibilities. But in order to make it work, the reader must always be conscious of the difference between rats and people. Robert C. O'Brien never forgot how the world might look and feel to a rat. His daughter's story, with its love interest and teenage preoccupations, superimposes a human way of life on to the rat world and blurs the distinction between animal and man.

*Mrs Frisby* told two stories simultaneously – one dealt with the past history of the rats and their dramatic escape from NIMH; the other

recounted a contemporary crisis affecting both rats and mice. Each story strengthened and sharpened the other, and the dovetailing added pace and suspense. The plot of *Racco* also split, divided between two protagonists. But here the result is a lack of focus and a turning off into coy digressions.

Jane Leslie Conly cannot be blamed for trying to repeat her father's success. She should not be criticized for wanting to add something of her own. That the result is a feeble copy of the original will be of little relevance to large numbers of children. The popularity of the first book will guarantee the success of the second, and this very ordinary story is sure to be widely read and enjoyed. Even now, the animators may be hard at work on *Rats Two*. Robert C. O'Brien did not live long enough to enjoy his success: perhaps it is fitting that his daughter should be the one to reap the rewards.

In Volume 14 of *Children's Literature*, the Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature and the Children's Literature Association, Gillian Adams analyses some of the very earliest writing for children: Sumerian texts dating from the Third Dynasty of Ur in 2112 BC. Among the fragments which have been discovered are songs and lullabies, school exercises, Aesopic animal fables and several texts about school and schooling, including "School Days", an account of a boy's two days at school. In the same volume, Milti Myers discusses the female tradition in eighteenth-century children's books, looking at the works of Mary Wolstonecraft from the point of view of the mother-teacher and examining the "fantasy of the perfect mother". This essay is illustrated by William Blake's engraving for Wolstonecraft's *Original Stories* of 1791. Nineteenth-century children's books are the subject of Joanna Gillespie's essay "Schooling through Fiction" which looks at Sunday School fiction in the United States. J. D. Stahl writes on "Moral Despair and the Child as Symbol of Hope in Pre-World War II Berlin". Elizabeth Keyser rediscovered Louisa May Alcott's story of 1872, "Cupid and Cow-chow", and Samuel J. Rogal examines the literary influences on a poem written by Elijah Fenton (1683-1730) when he was sixteen. Judith Plotz tells the affecting story of "poor Hartley" Coleridge, the son of Samuel Taylor and Sara Coleridge, and babe in Coleridge's Frost at Midnight, and the recipient of Wordsworth's "To H. C. Sixty Years Old". Hartley's obsession with childhood, Plotz claims, was the subject of much of his verse, celebrating the childhood state and seeing adult life as a steady decline. These themes can be seen in Hartley's previously unpublished, utopian fairy tale "Adolf and Annette", the text of which Plotz has transcribed from two manuscripts in the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas and which is printed here. *Children's Literature* 14, 1, published by Yale University Press (218pp. £25.0 300.03564 0).

# Bound up and recovered

## George D. Painter

PAUL NEEDHAM  
The Printer and the Pardoner: An unrecorded indulgence printed by William Caxton for the hospital of St Mary Rounceval, Charing Cross 101pp. Washington, DC: Library of Congress. \$27.50.  
0 8444 0508 6

Only half a dozen scholars in the last half-century (Jean Mortimer, Paul Morgan, Christopher Webb, Simon Pottesman, David Rogers and now Paul Needham) have experienced the English-speaking incunabulist's ultimate thrill of seeing a new Caxton swim into his ken. Paul Needham is curator of printed books and bindings at the Pierpont Morgan Library, an associate with Lotte Fellings in the future *England* section of the British Library's *Catalogue of Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century* and, as a specialist in early paper studies and their application to the problems of early printing, a worthy successor to the late Allan Stevenson. In 1980 he examined a composite volume containing four well-known Caxton editions given to the Library of Congress by Lessing J. Rosenwald, and discovered that the twelve surviving guard-strips of vellum waste used to deaden the sewing threads along the inner folds of quires were cut up from a hitherto

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 295

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than October 10. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration. Entries, marked "Author, Author 295" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on October 17.

1 The making of the day is a machine called the velocipede. It is a wheel-carriage to ride cock horse upon, sitting astride and pushing it along with the feet, a rubber wheel in hand – they will go seven miles an hour.

2 I shall we ever, my staunch Myfanwy, Blyde down to North Parade? Kari on the handle-bars, Marx in the saddlebag, Light my touch on your shoulder-blade.

3 "I've been considering a great while what should be the best gift for me to bestow upon my godchild, and I have resolved at last." – "I prithee what?" says Lady. "Well, I'll give him a dozen good Latin spoons, and thou shalt translate them." "Merry Passages and Jests", Harl MS: 6395, quoted in E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, volume 2, and *Oxford Book of Literary Anecdotes*.

Competition No 291

Winner: Malcolm Dean

Answer:

1 "I have been considering a great while what should be the best gift for me to bestow upon my godchild, and I have resolved at last." – "I prithee what?" says Lady. "Well, I'll give him a dozen good Latin spoons, and thou shalt translate them." "Merry Passages and Jests", Harl MS: 6395, quoted in E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, volume 2, and *Oxford Book of Literary Anecdotes*.

2 I told thee as a boy and know the coal cutting in its shed, late-afternoon lamboing informing the deal table, The ceiling grading in a radiant spool. I must be lying low in a room there, A strange child with a taste for verse, While my hand-dressed companions dream of war. On parchment yards and fields of rain-swept grass: "St. Michael, Courtyards in Delhi".

unknown Indulgence for the hospital of St Mary Rounceval printed by Caxton in his type 4 in 1480. Needham here edits these fragments (some twenty lines of an original twenty-six) with facsimile, Latin text, English translation, relevant illustrations and full discussion.

St Mary Rounceval (an offshoot of the priory at Roncevaux in Spanish Navarre, where Roland was slain by Basque separatists in 778 and the medieval pilgrimage road to Santiago de Compostela crossed the Pyrenees) lay at the junction of the Strand and Whitehall (then King Street), between the old Charing Cross and the Thames, on the present site of Charing Cross Station. The very name held special relish not only for Edward Lear, whom it inspired with his beautiful adjective for a hat or a spoon, but for Caxton, who had printed Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* three years before and would print them again three years after. The hospital was the home-base of Chaucer's "gentle Pardoner of Rouncevaile", with his wallet "brimfull of pardon come from Rome all hot", "hair yellow as wax" and "a jolly wench in every town".

The Rounceval indulgence is in the form of a letter of confraternity; that is, it confers not actual membership in the lay guild which then administered the hospital, but a modest and innocuous share in spiritual benefits enjoyed by full members, including their prayers after death. Perhaps historians ought to be more indulgent to indulgences. It is also noteworthy that Rounceval had documented contacts with

the neighbouring guild of St Margaret's Westminster, to which Caxton belonged; and that Caxton printed two other indulgences in March 1480 for the Knight of Rhodes John Kendale, who is named as joint issuer of the Rounceval indulgence, and who signed with Caxton as witness to the churchwardens' accounts of St Margaret's in that May. Whenever we pass the green lawn west of St Margaret's we pass Caxton's unknown grave, just as when we cross over the Great Smith Street corner we walk by his printing shop. In the new indulgence, as so often in Caxton's productions, it is pleasant to observe how things, times, places and people fit in, make sense and come to life.

In valuable appendices Needham provides censuses of other composite Caxton volumes, of unique Caxton fragments recovered from bindings, and of all Caxton's output in a new interim chronological order, based largely on his own paper researches to be published later. This redating from an expert and responsible scholar will make all Caxtonians think again and wait. His backdating to as early as 1483 of works using Caxton's type 5 (first found in a dated book in 1487) is startling. The assignment of *Golden Legend* in both settings in November 20, 1483 (rather than 1484 and 1487), seems on four grounds preposterous in the stricter sense of the word: if Needham can prove it, however, I for one would feel bound as gracefully as possible to eat my not very runcible hat.

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Rosemary Ashton's *George Eliot in the Past Masters* series was published in 1983.

Iain Bamforth's volume of poems, *The Modern Copernicus*, was published in 1984.

Nigel Barley is Assistant Keeper for West Africa at the Museum of Mankind. His *The Innocent Anthropologist*, 1983, reappeared in a paperback edition last year.

Gillian Beer is a Fellow of Girton College, Cambridge. Her *Darwin's Plots*, 1984, appeared in a paperback edition last year.

Robert Brata is the author of *Friends and Lovers*, 1977, and *Black and White Rivers*, 1979.

James Brown is a lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Texas, Austin.

James Campbell is the author of *Gate Fever: Voices from a prison*, which was published earlier this year.

Lesley Chamberlain's *Food and Cooking of Russia* was published in 1982.

Alexander Chancellor was Editor of the *Spectator* from 1975 to 1983. At present he is Washington Correspondent for the forthcoming daily newspaper, *The Independent*.

Anne Chisholm's *Faces of Hiroshima* was published last year.

Isabel Colegate's collection of stories, *A Glimpse of St. John's Glory*, 1985, was recently republished in paperback.

L. M. Cullen is Professor of Modern Irish History at Trinity College, Dublin. He is the author of *The Emergence of Modern Ireland 1600-1900*.

Richard Davenport-Hill is a member of the Business History Unit of the London School of Economics. He is editor of *Business History* and has recently been awarded the Wadsworth Prize for his *Dudley Docker: The Life and Times of a Trade Warrior*, 1985.

Rosemary Dinnage's *Annie Besant* will be published later this year.

Henry Gifford's books include *Tolstoy*, 1982.

Richard E. Grandy is a Professor of Philosophy at Rice University, Houston.

Reginald HIO's novel of the First World War, *No Man's Land*, was published in 1985.

Tim Hilton's books include *Picasso*, 1976.

Charles Hope is a lecturer in Renaissance Studies at the Warburg Institute, University of London. He is the author of *Titan*, 1980.

Anthony Howard is Deputy Editor of the *Observer*. From 1966 to 1969 he was the paper's Washington Correspondent.

James Hunter is the editor of *For The People's Cause: From the writings of John Murdoch, Highland and Irish land reformer*, which was published earlier this year.

Alan Jenkins's poems will appear in *New Chatter Poets*, which is published this week.

Ludmila Jordanova is the author of *Lamarck*, 1984.

Jonathan Keates's collection of stories, *Allgor Posillions*, appeared in 1983.

Roger Kimball is a regular contributor to *New Criterion*.

Peter Marshall is Professor of American History at the University of Manchester.

Charles Moollett was on the editorial staff of *Faber and Faber* from 1953 to 1985 and Chairman from 1977 to 1980.

Oswyn Murray is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford. His books include *Early Greece*, 1980.

Helko A. Oberman is a Visiting Professor of History at the University of Arizona.

Stephen Preece is co-translator of Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*, which was published earlier this year.

D. F. Pocock is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sussex.

Peter Reading's most recent collection of poems, *Ukulele Music*, was published last year.

Carol Rumens is the editor of *Making for the Open: The Chatter book of post-feminist poetry 1964-1986*, which was published last year.

G. V. Scammell is a Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge. His books include *The Great Chartered Trading Companies and the Sea*, 1983. He is currently completing a study of the first European colonial empires, *The First Imperial Age, 1400-1715*.

Christopher Thorne's *The Issue of War: States, societies and the Far Eastern Conflict of 1941-1945* was published in 1985.

E. S. Turner's books include *Dear Old Blighty*, 1980, and *An ABC of Nostalgia*, 1984. He has been a contributor to *Punch* for fifty years.

John Ure's most recent book, *Trepassers on the Amazon*, will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

Alexander Walker is the Film Critic of the *Evening Standard*.

Marianne Warner's *Monuments and Moldens: The allegory of the female form*, 1985, recently won the Fawcett Book Prize.

J. F. Watkins is Professor Emeritus of Medical Microbiology at the University of Wales.

# INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

- Baker, G. P., and P. M. S. Hacker. *Whitigstein: Rules, grammar and necessity* 1037
- Baldwin, James. *Evidence of Things Not Seen* 1025
- Barnes, Julian. *Staring at the Sun* 1028
- Bogarde, Dirk. *Backcloth* 1027
- Boulton, Marshall M. *Agrarian Radicalism in South India* 1040
- Breytenbach, Breyten. *End Papers. The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist. Muroir: Mirrored of a novel* 1029
- Brook, Joseph. *Less Than One: Selected essays* 1019
- Conly, Jane Leslie. *Racco and the Rats of NIMH* 1042
- Crane, Elaine Farman. *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the revolutionary era* 1023
- Durand, Maurice M., and Nguyen Tran Huan. *An Introduction to Vietnamese Literature* 1022
- Elliot, Janice. *Dr Gruber's Daughter* 1028
- Evans, Peter. *Ari: The life and times of Aristotle Socrates Onassis* 1027
- Foot, Paul. *Murder at the Farm: Who killed Carl Bridge water?* 1025
- Gelger, Gall. *Flippino Lippl's Carafa Chapel: Renaissance art in Rome* 1038
- Giles, Frank. *Sundry Times* 1026
- Glimcher, Arnold, and Marc Glimcher (Editors). *Je Suis le Cahier: The sketchbooks of Picasso* 1034
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Torquato Tasso* 1036
- Hamilton, David. *The Monkey Gland Affair* 1024
- Harding, Antony John. *Coleridge and the Inspired Word* 1035
- Hart-Davis, Duff (Editor). *End of an Era: Letters and Journals of Sir Alan Lascelles from 1887 to 1920* 1026
- Herbert, Zbigniew. *Barbarian in the Garden* 1020
- Hope, Christopher. *The Hottentot Room* 1029
- Horgan, Dorothy. *Tom and Maggie* 1042
- Jackson, H. J. (Editor). *Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 1035
- King, Hede. *Desmond. Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets* 1036
- Kleist, Heinrich von, Ludwig Tieck, E. T. A. Hoffmann. *St. German Romantic Tales* 1036
- Knapp, Steven. *Personification and the Sublime: Milton to Coleridge* 1035
- Koko, Gabriel. *Anatomy of a war, 1940-1975* 1021
- Kosicki, Jadwiga, and Daniel Gerould. *A Life of Solitude: Stanislaw Przymyslawski: A biographical study with selected letters* 1020
- Lacey, Robert. *Ford: the man and the machine* 1023
- Ludden, David. *Peasant History in South India* 1040
- MacCarthy-Morrogh, Michael. *The Munster Plantation: English migration to southern Ireland 1583-1641* 1036
- Mitford, Nancy. *A Tale of Annoy: Essays, Journalism and reviews* 1026
- Modiano, Raymond. *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* 1035
- Money, James. *Capri: Island of pleasure* 1041
- Moore, Mick. *The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka* 1040
- Napier, A. David. *Masks, Transformation and Paradox* 1040
- Natke, Richard. *and Antony Preston. The Weidenfeld Atlas of Maritime History* 1039
- Needham, Paul. *The Printer and the Pardoner: An unrecorded indulgence printed by William Caxton for the hospital of St Mary Rounceval, Charing Cross* 1043
- Newlyn, Lucy. *Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion* 1035
- Nielson, Waldemar A. *The Golden Donors: A new anatomy of the great foundations* 1023
- Nixon, Richard. *No More Vietnam* 1021
- Perera, Victor. *A Guatemalan Boyhood* 1027
- Porter, Roy (Editor). *Patients and Practitioners: Lay perceptions of medicine in pre-industrial society* 1024
- Prestwich, Emma (Editor). *International Calvinism 1541-1715* 1039
- Saakow, James M. *Canyemedo in the Renaissance* 1038
- Schwartz, Brinn M. *Travels Through the Third World* 1041
- Sperber, Dan, and Deirdre Wilson. *Relevance: Communication and cognition* 1037
- Sutcliff, Rosemary. *Flame-Coloured Taffeta* 1042
- Walton, John, Paul B. Beson and Ronald Bodley Scott (Editors). *The Oxford Companion to Medicine: Volume 1, A-M, Volume 11, N-Z*